

# Black Pioneers: Artefacts in the Grey County Gallery

## Items of interest from Grey Roots Museum Collection

Joan Hyslop

*Camphor Bottle*  
(1963.008.001)



Once owned by Rebecca (Cousby) Boeoy, this colourless, spiral-patterned glass camphor bottle is 14 centimetres high. No glass factory identification is present. There was no stopper donated with it, so it is not known if it originally had a glass stopper or if Mrs. Boeoy used a cork stopper. There is a flanged lip that is four centimetres in diameter and there are vertical ridges on the neck of the bottle. For its relatively small size, the camphor bottle is quite heavy, compared to modern day glassware. The bottle once held camphor, a gummy, volatile, fragrant crystalline compound that is obtained from the wood and bark of the camphor tree. For centuries, camphor was commonly used as a liniment and mild topical analgesic. A 1920 home medicine book mentioned that sniffing camphor was good for headache relief. Today camphor is a common ingredient in many sore muscle lotions and cold remedies, such as “Vicks VapoRub”. According to her daughter Mary, Rebecca used to sniff from the bottle whenever she felt unwell.

An obituary for Mrs. Rebecca Boeoy is seen in *The Owen Sound Daily Sun-Times*, Friday, Dec. 10, 1926 edition. It reported that she died at the age of 83 at the home of her daughter Mary, at 12th St. West, Owen Sound. Rebecca Anne Cousby, the daughter of Rev. Henry Cousby and May Ann Allan of Virginia was born in Toronto in 1844. She was predeceased by her husband Abraham Boeoy, whom she married in 1874. Their four children were listed in 1926 as Mrs. Smith of Owen Sound, Henry Boeoy of Cleveland, Ohio, Moses Boeoy of Bay City, Michigan, and Miss Mary Boeoy. Rebecca was survived by her sister, Mrs. Emma C. McIntyre of Washington, D.C.



*Miss Mary Boeoy*

The Henry Cousby family left Toronto and is listed in the 1851 census at Artemesia Township. There are photographs of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Cousby in the Grey County Archives (they are also pictured in the Daniel G. Hill book, *The Freedom Seekers*). Henry Cousby regularly preached in the British Methodist Episcopal (B.M.E.) church in Owen Sound. Melba Croft, in her book *Fourth Entrance to Huronia* (p. 104) suggests that the



Cousbys moved to Owen Sound in 1859. Henry Cousby was listed in Lovell's Directory of 1871 as a confectioner, with his business at Scrope St. (9<sup>th</sup> St. E.). His son, Jeremiah Cousby Sr., who had been born in Toronto in 1839, also became a confectioner. Also known as Jerry Cousby, he married Mary Johnson (d. 1868) and later, Emmaline Hall in 1893. Jerry Cousby had his own confectionary store on Main St., which was opened in 1867. He won a silk hat in 1907 for being Owen Sound's most popular

merchant. He died in August 1920. His son, Jeremiah Cousby Jr., was an Owen Sound lacrosse player and an associate editor of *The Sun* newspaper at Owen Sound before he left to become a lawyer in Alaska, where he died as a young man.



The 1865-1866 *Gazetteer & Directory of the County of Grey*, by W. W. Smith, listed Henry, John and Jeremiah Cousby as labourers and sawfitter, working in Owen Sound.



(above left) Jeremiah Cousby Jr.  
(left) Rev. Henry Cousby  
(right) Mrs. Henry Cousby

This delicate brooch also belonged to Rebecca (Cousby) Booe. It is inlaid with what appears to be mother-of-pearl and stone pieces. It has a square-shaped blue centre, pink flowers, and also a Victorian style pin stem-holding curl. No maker's name is present. This type of nineteenth-century "micro-mosaic" jewellery is commonly referred to as *pietra dura*, an Italian term meaning "hard stone". Various types of stone were used such as; chalcedony, agate, jasper and lapis lazuli.



*Mosaic Brooch (1963.008.003)*

The stone was cut into thin slices and set into various grades of silver, gold or brass. The surface of the piece is entirely flush, with no protruding grooves between the tiles, giving

it an almost hand-painted quality. *Pietra dura* pieces were popular for bracelets and brooches from 1860-1870 and often depicted birds, insects, butterflies and floral designs.

*Darning Egg (2002.008.001)*



This darning egg belonged to Mrs. James Henry Hall (nee Sarah Isabell Earll), who was born on June 22, 1900 at Holland Centre, Ontario. Her family later lived in Owen Sound, Ontario. Mrs. Hall was married at Mobert, Ontario in April, 1921 and died on Feb. 5, 1959. This darning egg has a shiny black finish and a sterling silver appliqué. It would have been held inside a stocking or garment, providing a surface to

darn against and stretching the material, making it much easier to mend a hole using a needle and thread or yarn. There is no maker's identification on it. Similar looking needlework items were sold in catalogues, circa 1900. It is possible that Mrs. Hall inherited the darning egg, perhaps from her mother or grandmother?



*(above left) Mr. James Henry Hall and Sarah Isabell Earll on their wedding day in 1921*  
*(above right) Solomon Levi Earll family portrait - 1924*