

HOMES OF ONE HUNDRED YEARS OR MORE

Just a word about the houses that were built a hundred years ago or more.

In the early years, the Loyalists aimed to build square or oblong houses with a central hall plan running the length of the house and rooms opening on each side. This was the fashion from 1816 and this style continued in use through the 1830's and 40's and belated examples are found after 1860. The newer models were Regency or Gothic with its ridged roofs and dormers.

A good many of the immigrants were farmers with some means and these immigrants brought with them from the old country the Regency style. It was marked by a plain treatment of exteriors, ornament being restricted to the main doorway and perhaps the openings directly above it. Fewer and larger windows were used and in masonry buildings, the windows were set back. Doors too were recessed, the side lights and transom being in line with the inside wall. Verandas became more common often extending around three sides of the house. Later verandas were often restricted to a small porch at the front door, often supported by trellis or columns.

Another type of house became more common and was to continue to be used to the end of the century. Instead of the house being rectangular (as Georgian), it was square in plan with its roof hipped from all 4 sides to a short ridge or flat on top. These houses usually have a central hall right through the house with the stairs toward the back. All four rooms were of fair size.

In southern Ontario variations on this type of architecture was carried out. Details might be derived from books, but the design was worked out by the builder whether carpenter, brick layer or mason under the instructions of his client. Directions might consist simply to build a house like so and so's with a smaller parlour, an extra fireplace, a better woodshed or some other changes. The success of the design would depend on the craftsman's skill. It is the rightness of proportions that makes these buildings satisfying, and the attempts at fine architecture are exceptional.

Planks, boards and framing timbers came from the sawmill and such details as doors, windows, trim inside and out and mantelpieces were made on the spot.

Some Regency houses had a small square hall directly inside the front door with a winding staircase leading to the rooms above. The downstairs rooms opened off this hall and often these were in addition to a back hall with a back stairs. This seems to be the type of this house, which tradition says was patterned after the family home in Devon.

The styles of houses build in Ontario is a fascinating study and too extensive to go into here.

Many first of 50 and 100 years ago have destroyed many old homes. Others have been pulled down or altered so as to now lack interest or merit. Our architectural heritage is vanishing and now slowly. For protecting our building heritage credit must be given to the Ontario Government and Ontario Conservation authorities particularly for their work of restoration at Upper Canada Village and at Black Creek Pioneer Village, Toronto. The Historic Sites branch has shown a growing interest in architecture. Of immense importance is the federal government's beginning of an inventory of Ontario buildings. Many small municipalities and historical societies have saved and maintained good local buildings. The Architectural Conservatory of Ontario, a private society for 30 years, has been trying to prod the public conscience to recognize that buildings can of themselves be notable, even though General Broch, Sir John A. McDonald or other worthy never slept there. If you have an old house, cherish it and do not make radical changes so as to alter its appearance such as picture windows or other modern improvements for in doing so, the house loses its architectural interest.

SETTLEMENT OF LOCKES SPRINGS

NOW JUST A MEMORY

In a stretch of land on the 10th and 11th concessions of North Yarmouth, bordering on the banks of Kettle Creek where empty Lockes Springs, a little settlement sprung up in the early days of the township.

The Locke family bought up land thereabouts and are credited with having given impetus to the establishment of the tiny community. Nowadays little seems known of this pioneer settlement, evidence of which has nearly all passed into oblivion. Its environs are reached by driving eastward from the London and Port Stanley Railway on concession eleven, Yarmouth.

The sideroad in the Lockes Springs area is said to have been once a continuation of the original Wellington Road. The latter thoroughfare (now paved) presently follows a different course as it traverses this section of countryside in the direction of St. Thomas. The eleventh concession, east of this sideroad, is a blind road. For a short distance there are traces of gravel, then hardly more than a track through the shrubbery, ending in a cowpath as the stream is approached.

The winding Kettle Creek is very picturesque at Lockes Springs, bordered by a heavy growth of smallish trees. Deep ravines cut down to the stream, through which water runs continually fed by the springs. This heavily wooded area is difficult to penetrate in places. A couple of small concrete bridges, covered with clay, permit the streamlets to cross the roadway and join the creek nearby. They have heavy concrete buttresses. Near the opposite side of the springs area is a horseshoe-shaped pond in which lily pads float. The Canadian Pacific Railway runs in a north-easterly direction east of Lockes Springs, between St. Thomas and Belmont.

On the right, not far from the crossroads, an old frame barn remained until not long ago. It was on the former Sinclair farm, originally 100 acres but since divided.



Demolished some time ago, this barn on the former Sinclair farm was the last remaining building in the Locke's Springs vicinity. The farm is now owned by Donald Burgess.

The Sinclairs had a clay house, one of the extremely few of its kind ever built in Western Ontario, no trace of which remains. This mud house had thick walls constructed of blye clay mixed with straw and thoroughly trampled by oxen or horses. The front of it faced the eleventh concession road. It had a large fireplace at the west end. There was a central hall entrance and an upstairs. The latter was a sort of attick under the higher portion of the roof and had no windows. Bannisters, etc., of the stairway were choice walnut.

The eaves were somewhat overhanging, while the cellarway was at the east end, covered by a pair of trap doors, at an angle, which opened upwards. Clay steps, packed hard, led down to the entrance proper. The many-paned windows had wide sills on which meals or lunches were sometimes served. The participants pulled their chairs to them as they would a table. A kitchen, said to have been frame, was at the rear of the main house.

The builder of this clay house is believed to have been Donald Sinclair, pioneer owner of the farm. His son, James Sinclair, had the place for years and succeeding owners have been Ross McMurray, Clarence Pinkham and Donald Burgess.



THE SINCLAIR HOMESTEAD

(2 story mud house)

Lot 6, 10th concession of Yarmouth

(11th concession, blind road)

Picture taken 1920's

(from left to right) James Sinclair, Matilda Bingham (McMurray) Sinclair,
Fred and Mabel Evans?, Fred Mills?

Information given by Mrs. (Jean) Carroll, step-daughter, Dutton, Ont.

Little seems known now of the sawmill, school or church thought to have once been somewhere in this vicinity. The site of the blacksmith shop, atop the hill at Lockes Springs, can still be pointed out.

Some years ago, Archie McLarty lived on the south side of the road, but not as far in as the Sinclair place. His frame house and barn were later moved out to a farm on the sideroad. The house was burned down and a new one built at the same locale.

The remains of the grist mill's old clay dam, and mill race, are still in evidence. The wooden buttresses have long since rotted away. The mill, which burned down years ago, is claimed to have been on the north side of the concession line, at the second hill east of the crossroads and a little beyond the Sinclair place. A syndicate from St. Thomas once built a wooden dam of heavy timbers and stocked the stream with trout but this too has disappeared. The writer is grateful to Alex. Ferguson, Ross McMurray, and P.R. Locke for help in obtaining some of these items.

Some time ago, Mr. Locke wrote as follows: "The original settler north of St. Thomas was from Devonshire, England, William Henry Locke (my great-grandfather.) He had a son, Henry, who resided near Belmont for a number of years. My grandfather was William, and as far as I know his descendants are the only members of the family still in this locality."

Written by A. S. Garrett
for the St. Thomas Times-Journal
(Clipping courtesy Mrs. Ida Galbraith
and Ormonde Lewis).

THE MUD HOUSES OF NORTH YARMOUTH

A paper given by the Tweedsmuir History Curator,

MRS. HAROLD R. DAVIS,

at the 20th Anniversary of the Yarmouth Glen W. I.

March 8, 1979.

MEMBERS, FRIENDS AND VISITORS : -

I realize that everyone who is here tonight is probably not all that interested in history as such, but most of us as housewives are interested in our homes. I thought that it might be interesting in the next few minutes to go on an airmchair tour of North Yarmouth, and most particularly that area covered by our Tweedsmuir History, and look at some of the very old homes, the mud houses of North Yarmouth.

Most of us are familiar with the names of the first settlers in our area. In 1831 the Gilbert, Penhale, Westlake and Andrews families came in a group. There was a reason for this. Mrs. Richard Gilbert (nee Martha Andrews) was a sister to Mrs. Richard Penhale (nee Mary Andrews), the Rev. Richard Andrews was their brother, and Simon Westlake and his wife were very good friends of the other three couples. They had pooled their resources together to emigrate and were determined to help each other in the new land. Shortly after their arrival at Port Stanley, Richard Gilbert and Simon Westlake visited Col. Talbot to see about getting their land grants on the Edgeware Road. Richard Penhale, a farrier, set up a blacksmith shop in St. Thomas, but later that year Penale was granted Lot 10 on the south side of the Edgeware Road and he set up his shop there. The Rev. Richard Andrews was a well-educated man of many talents and had really come to the new land with the hope of setting up an Academy, but due to a lack of pupils he later took up 100 acres to the west on the 10th concession, where he farmed, tutored pupils, and became the first Baptist minister in the community.

Progressing along the Edgeware Road east of the Radio Road, and opposite the Archibald farm, now owned by Clayton Reid, Lot 10, we find the land taken up by Richard Penhale and his family in 1831, for which he received the Crown Deed on May 10, 1839. The first home on this farm, as it was on the others, was a small log cabin, covered with elm bark. A few years later, in 1837, a mud house was built. It was 36 X 40 with walls 22 inches thick and was a two-story house with huge beams supporting the upper floor. The downstairs contained a large living room and dining room, with two bedrooms, a kitchen and pantry. There was a large hall at the front entrance. Upstairs there were four bedrooms, a storeroom and a large hall. An addition, a wooden structure, containing a summer kitchen and wood-shed with cement floor was added to the rear much later. The house was built on a stone foundation and had a cellar with a brick floor and stone walls. A good well was in this cellar. The house was plastered on the inside and the outside had a rough-cast finish. There were small stones in this finish resembling a stucco effect. The house was heated by a fireplace and stoves and was warm in winter and cool in summer. The house was occupied continuously by members of the family until it was destroyed by fire in June 1934, first by Richard Penhale, then his son Thomas Penhale, followed by Thomas' daughter, Sarah, who married Lachlin Tisdale. Mrs. Donald Begg, nee Eileen Tisdale, who gave this information, is a great-granddaughter of the original settler, Richard Penhale. She tells that the old house burned so slowly, being constructed of mud, that nearly everything of value was saved from the house, including the front door which is now installed in her home on the Fingal (Talbot) Road.

(See Lot 10 Edgeware Road, Mount Pleasant.)

On the next lot to the east, Lot 11, there was another mud house. It is not too clear as to just who owned this lot when the mud house was erected. In a list of land patents granted between 1799 and 1870 the first owner of this property is listed as James Doying and he received his Crown Deed to the 100 acres March 15, 1854, which seems to indicate that this mud house was built for him, as it is thought that all three such houses on the road were built within a year or two by the owners and their friends and neighbours using "bee" labour. A few years later this property was owned by Archibald Black who also owned Lot 10 on the north side of the Edgeware Road, which had been deeded to John Black Jan. 21, 1851. The Blacks erected a frame dwelling on this lot on the same spot as Donna and Robert Bushell's house has recently been built. The old mud house stood on the same spot as the frame house now stands on Robert Van Patter's west farm Lot 11. The mud house was taken down prior to 1914 by Harvey Fishbach who had the contract, with Cedric Evans working as his helper. The old house was so well built that they had an extremely hard job to demolish it. Then the frame house, which had been built by the Blacks, was moved to the east onto this spot and renovated by Mr. Fishbach to be used as a tenant house by the Gilberts who had now purchased this farm to add to their holdings on Lot 12. This farm was operated after Matthew Gilbert's