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A- Architecture - Cobourg (03-25)



The German style of brick-laying used in Sunnyside Cottage is uncommon in Canada.

Brick-laying design highlights house

By Peggy Wright

A farmhouse which stands on the east end of King Street, known locally as the Checkerboard House, was built in 1878.

The original owner was Leopold Kobald, a butcher who came to Montreal in 1844 from Ephmben, Baden, in what is now Germany.

Kobald first arrived in Cobourg in 1847. He built a grey brick house with gothic details around 1860 on Cottesmore Avenue (see building history April 29).

Before the construction of the King Street house, "Sunnyside Cottage," as it was referred to in the *Cobourg Sentinel Star* of Jan. 5, 1882 when a wedding took place there, there was another residence on the property owned and lived in by Kobald.

But in 1878, the local headlines blurted the news of a 'Disasterous Fire' in which Kobald reportedly lost \$11,000 worth of assets. These included the house, all the furniture, and a huge quantity of stored and curing meat.

The newspaper story said that the fire occurred after a burglary. A lamp was knocked over — intentionally or otherwise — during the "ransacking," starting the blaze.

These unfortunate circumstances lead to the construction of the second house.

At the time, the property included around 200 acres, and Kobald raised some of his own animals for butchering.

During his time in Cobourg, Kobald built up quite a lucrative business. He had a stall in the Cobourg Market for 24 years, and received local recognition for his quality meats and continual service when he moved from the area.

Kobald married Wilhelmena Vollrath. They had nine children, five daughters and four sons.

One son moved to Winnipeg in 1881. Kobald followed the next year.

It was in Winnipeg with three of his sons that

Building history

Kobald built up a huge butcher's supply business, one of the largest of its kind in Canada.

For a number of years, they were the sole suppliers of meat and meat products to the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Another son began a similar business which later became the Western Packing Company. It is one of the oldest established and still-surviving business ventures in Winnipeg.

At the time of writing, the owners of Sunnyside Cottage who followed Kobald are not known.

Around 1980 it was purchased and converted into large apartments.

The most remarkable characteristic of the residence, the brick-laying design of the house, is in a German style. It is rare for this area and not common anywhere in Canada. There are a few examples of similar types around Kitchener where groups of Germans settled.

The original natural color of the brick would not have been quite so pronounced. The house was probably painted in the 1920s and the darker brick highlighted by deepening the color. Around this time a large verandah and big square porch on the front were removed.

The style is basically Ontario. Unusual are the doorway and front windows, not for their semi-circular shape at the top, but because this type was already old-fashioned in the Cobourg of 1878, and had been replaced by rectangular and less fancy transoms.

It is particularly attractive after dark, when the shape of the windows is accentuated by the light spilling from inside and softened by the leaves of the shrubs which surround the front.

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