



IVY CREEPS comfortably over the aged stones at the Rockwood home of Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Price. An arbor introduces the flower border and the old pump still stands at

the door of this hospitable home. In today's Free Press, a visit and tour of the Price home by way of pictures and words. — (Staff Photo)



MR. AND MRS. Vincent Price chat about their home over a cup of tea. Treasures have been gathered over many years. The Prices enjoy living in Rockwood, where they have been for a few years. — (Staff Photo)

"Wishwood" gracious old home built by second area settler

The sign on the entrance through the old rail fence reads "Wishwood Farm" and, as you follow the windy trail up the tree shaded hill you are at once impressed that such a beautiful stretch of farm land could possibly be encompassed in a small village and yet hidden enough to capture the privacy of rustic solitude.

Wishwood, the farm home of two comparative newcomers to the Rockwood village and one of the district's most elegant examples of early Canadiana masonry.

The stone home of Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Price, located off No. 7 Highway as one drives through Rockwood, has the banks of the Eramosa for its farm grounds' most prominent boundary as its acreage stretches as far as the CNR railroad tracks right down to Rockwood's first school house on Harris Street.

135 years old
It's a marvellous old home, built some 135 years ago, by Colonel Henry Strange, the second original settler in the district and a builder who history records as both a prominent and somewhat unusual figure in the community of his day who, to the people in the area, was generally known as "Squire Strange". A surveyor by profession, it was Squire Strange who laid out plans of the village of Rockwood and was also the appointed Magistrate of the township of Eramosa.

The present property of Wishwood Farm comprises some eight-and-a-half acres, all within the village of Rockwood. It is the last remaining integral part of the



CHAIR ON left leaves room for lady's bustle; old spinning wheel makes another corner attractive. — (Staff Photo)

1,200 to 1,500 acres originally acquired by Henry Strange in the early 1830's and the story, authenticated by members of his family as to how he came into possession of this extensive area, is, in itself, an interesting one.

Guelph settler
His father, also Henry Strange, was one of the earliest settlers in what is now the City of Guelph. He had come from Tunbridge Wells, Kent, England, apparently in the early 1820's and bought the first house built in Guelph, well known as "The Priory" which was erected by John Galt of the

Canada Company. It is a known fact that it was John Galt, acting for the Canada Company who did much to develop Guelph and Galt and much of this part of Western Ontario. Unfortunately however, the "Priory" which was a fine example of a large early Canadian house, built of the choicest timber, no longer exists although a replica, built to scale, is to be seen in Riverside Park, Guelph.

Prepare brochure
According to the brochure which the Prices, had specially prepared, on the compiled historical data of the Rockwood property, "It is evident that Henry Strange, Sr. must also have acquired substantial land to the east of Guelph in what is now the Rockwood area in the Township of Eramosa.

"The family story is, that when Henry Strange, the son, was about to be married, his father gave him the choice, of either a house in Guelph or the gift of some 1,200 to 1,500 acres of forest and bushland in the Township and the son wisely chose the latter. After clearing much of the forest and bushland on his newly acquired property, the son selected as the site for his house a prominent knoll overlooking both the Eramosa River and the road through the Village of Rockwood, which has since become part of Provincial Highway No. 7."

Delightful surprise
A tour through the lovely old home is a delightful surprise. It was tastefully decorated and furnished to match the early Canadiana background of its original era and, as one proceeds from room to room one feels the genuine hospitality and warmth that exudes. Over the years the vintage residence has had few owners and each in their turn kept the buildings in good order and, by the time Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Price perched onto the country home, only minor restoration was required in its preservation.

On entry into the Vincent Price farmhouse the heavy front door opens onto a majestic, pine-floored centre hallway with a spiral staircase to the second floor.

There are eight fireplaces in the vintage homestead and all are functioning. It is evident as one passes through the various rooms that the home has been built in two sections and, ac-

ording to the Wishwood Farm brochure, "the back portion was built, it seems, in the early 1830's from stone in Colonel Strange's own quarries and consisted of four rooms, two on each floor".

Apparently there had also been a stone "smoke house" at the rear of the house complete with fire place and chimney for cooking purposes. However, this has since dissipated into ruins. The front or main part of the house, built a few years later was of more finished stone and the basement of the entire structure, is deep with high ceilings and completely done in stone."

Prosperity
It would seem that Squire Strange had made rapid progress towards prosperity as the front and newer portion of the building is a slightly grander structure than that built earlier and the pine flooring in the later section of the house is of narrower dimensions as compared to the wide pine in the back half.

When the Prices moved into the dwelling it was required that five coats of paint remover be applied to restore the "3/4" gorgeous pine floors to their original quality. Today they glisten, reflecting the early Canadiana tradition. Wallpapering, repainting, and replacing bannister rails and supports has been the eight year project of Mr. and Mrs. Price who acquired Wishwood Farm in 1963 and named it after a fictional homestead as described in one of the English writers T.S. Elliott's novels.

No structural renovations were required, Vincent and Ruth Price were intent in preserving all its old charm and characteristic, they did, however, have it rewired electrically.

High ceilings
Throughout the house, beautifully sculptured mouldings enhance the tall ceilings which are some 14 feet in height. In the master study on the right of the spacious hallway, the entire room is framed on the ceiling by exquisite floral plaster cutouts which appear too intricate to be lathe constructed but too perfectly matched to be carved individually.

According to Mr. Price, Squire Strange, when making his addition, heard that artisans from Italy were building mansions in New England and commissioned them to do the scroll work which can be seen in the hallways, on fixture bases, and around ceilings in the second section of the Rockwood house. Not one portion of the moulding is cracked or fractured, indicative

of the solidity of its framework and the ability of the artist.

Another feature of the Price home is the deep window sills on which Ruth has carefully used simple glass curtains in order that the beauty of the woodwork around the windows can be seen. It is said that the reason for the unusual height of the sills was to discourage small children in the household from attempting to peak outside so they wouldn't be frightened by wolves.

Early Victorian
The living room, furnished in early Victorian boasts accumulated furnishings from England, with a copy of the French artist, Dufy's "Yellow Violin" as painted by a young artist friend of the Prices, Leonard Huggard. Several other pictures of the Prices' summer home on the Bay of Fundy and St. John's are depicted by the famous artist Jack Humphrey, now deceased, who came from Ruth's native province of New Brunswick.

A music room, complete with fireplace, is a charming, smaller one off the hallway which again reflects the hospitality of the present owners as many mementoes of the past decorate the walls and tables. Two dolls, completely attired in the uniform of the Royal Regiment, are strong reminders of Vincent Price's early First World War army days when he was a British Empire Machine Gun Officer in the Royal Grenadiers.

Lovely accents
From the dining room with its delightfully arranged collection of Victorian bottles and a painting by Ruth's mother, to the kitchen, colourfully attired in the colours of the famous French artist, Henri Matisse; copperware is hung artfully on the painted walls and old, refinished farm feed bench adds a new innovation to the vintage habitat. Everything displays graciousness, taste, and signs of rapport with past traditions as the personal Captain's chest from the last Ontario sailing ship, stands in the hallway, a save from a vessel which was destroyed because it took up space in the Toronto harbour.

An old spinning wheel, a grandfather clock and numerous items of exquisite Chippendale, grace the rooms and hallways in the ancient house and upstairs, bedrooms with heirloom beds and portraits of daughter Laura Anne, are interestingly arranged.

Pine sideline
As one moves from the front portion of the second floor to the back the wider pine floor boards remind us of the earlier era when the Rockwood farm was spotted with rounds of pine trees which, we understand, was a side business of the country squire who is listed as owning and operating a saw mill, a carding machine and cloth factory, as well as the grist mill which is now to be seen across from the highway as the Hoptop's Mill, now owned and operated by Jimmie Milne of Main Street. Squire Strange also conducted a limestone quarrie business on his property.

Looking from the upper back stairway down to the kitchen one is amused to see a fantasy of rabbits resembling those of Henry Matisse's artistry and Ruth Price weaves a comical yarn of: a visit from Leonard Huggard their artist friend, a plain wall, and a desire

for decoration with Matisse rabbits. The artist copied the rabbits from a picture which his hostess had on hand and the result is a comical entrance through the upstairs staircase where all types of bunnies identify with the numerous creatures which hop about the outside acreage of Wildwood Farm.

Hospitable home
Humour, taste, and diligence, the entire household stimulates. It presents that lived-in element of hospitality, not one of a pressing museum atmosphere which is often significant of restoration. Even the cellar portion has been put into functional use. The dirt floor has been replaced with stone and the first section converted into a stock room where magazines, important documents and law books have been neatly stacked for referral also serving as reminders of Vincent Price's law firm days with the Kingsmill Law Firm in Toronto of which he was the head a few years before his retirement two years ago.

The second room in the high ceilinged basement is a masterpiece of true Canadiana antiquity. The Centennial project of the charming couple was the restoration of the room in which an authentic cobbler's bench, worn and used, stands nearby a Boston rocker; an ancient washstand, and a beautiful old New Brunswick - "Forest Beauty" purchased in 1965 on which read can be baked to perfection in the large oven on top of the stove. Copperware from the Paris Flea Market, a Spanish water jug, and a Grecian water container blends ancient and modern as a chest, restored, boasts oiled drawings of the Forest, Bay of Fundy, Maces Bay, and a historical Sardine Canning Factory.

Lifetime career
Everything follows. Ruth Price who served at the completion of the first Great War as a Physiotherapist in Christie Street Hospital has had a lifetime



ITALIAN WORKMEN fashioned moulding in ceiling of charming home. It's believed workmen came over to Canada especially to do this work. — (Staff Photo)

career of restoring and repairing. After a post-graduate course at McGill University she organized and inaugurated the Physiotherapy Department of the Toronto General Hospital. She enjoys people and things and,

through her husband's affiliation as the past National President of United Nations in Toronto and National Chairman of UNESCO, together these two have acquired numerous friends. Many of their possessions are tokens of esteem which have been given to them during their travels in devastated countries throughout the world and, as friendship gifts when their home was a "drop-in" centre for teachers, doctors, engineers, or anyone who came, from Greece to the Philippines, to use the Price Home as their temporary UNESCO headquarters, when Vincent was the National Chairman for the Canadian Council for Reconstruction through UNESCO.

Died pauper
It is fitting that Ruth and Vincent Price should want to re-establish one of Ontario's disappearing historical homesteads. Records show that Squire Strange, born in Denerraro, England, on date of September 16th, 1815, had come to Canada at five years of age. He had prospered to become a wealthy resident and magistrate in Eramosa. Over the years however, he saw his fortune diminish and all his possessions disappear until, in 1906, he died, a pauper, and, at the time of his death was living in a tiny house on Rockwood's Valley Road to which he had ludicrously applied the name "Liberty Hall."

In restoring the Squire's early residence, Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Price's efforts have, as is mentioned in the Wishwood Farm documentary, attempted to maintain for posterity two structures which must be regarded as outstanding examples of early Canadiana. The second building mentioned in the brochure refers to the old stone barn, also on the property, which is equally a triumph of architecture and engineering as designed by Casimir Gzowski, a prominent engineer for whom Gzowski Street in Rockwood was named.



VIEW UPSTAIRS from the front door shows an impressive old grandfather clock, graceful bannisters and moulding. — (Staff Photo)



DECORATIVE wash basin came originally from Paris. — (Staff Photo)



THE PRICES reconstructed a pioneer kitchen in their basement as a centennial project, using authentic furnishings. — (Staff Photo)