

Century-old structure

Threshing area now living room as old barn converted into home

By Joyce Heaton

When the Smith children leave the door open they can literally be accused of being "raised in a barn".

Allan, Kerry and Simon live in a 100-year-old barn with their parents Ed and Stephanie Smith. The Smiths found the stone barn in Nassagaweya at the end of a long search for a home in the country.

Ed believes the country is the only place to raise kids. He commutes each day to Toronto where he is the principal of a school for retarded children. Stephanie is in complete agreement and they have both worked hard to transform the barn to what will some day be a magnificent rustic home.

Children helped

They bought the barn and 100 acres of land in May of 1971. During that summer they lived in a tent while cleaning the piles of manure and rotted hay from the barn. The children worked right alongside their parents, mostly finding it a fun adventure.

Beginning in September and for the following three months Ed and Stephanie commuted each night and every weekend from Toronto. By December they were both feeling the strain and decided to rent temporary quarters in Campbellville. That winter it was so cold while working on the house they knocked ice from the two by fours before using them.

Once the inside of the barn was cleaned to the bare earth, the footings and beam structure were set in place. The inside structure is all sitting on the ground with beams supporting the roof. All the beams are placed in the original positions.

In May of 1972 they moved into the barn. There was no water or plumbing. Power and light was provided for by two extension cords and they used a ladder to climb to the bedroom area.

Large fireplace

The first thing built was the fireplace which divides the living from the dining room area and reaches 20 feet from ceiling to floor in the middle section of the house. This was their only source of heat at the time.

The large barn doors located on each side of the barn were replaced with windows. On the dining room wall are nine foot high windows separated every 12 inches by two by six cedar divisions. Ed designed and built this unique effect across the 12 foot expanse.

On the living room side a 500 lb. thermopane window was installed, part of which opens in sliding doors. The Smiths have not been without their heartaches and frustrations during renovation and

this had to be one of the biggest. They brought the large window from Toronto and hauled it across the snow on a toboggan to the site, only to have it crack as they were installing it.

Ed plans to replace it, but for the moment it is patched and still in place, a grim reminder of the day the air was blue in the Smith household.

Was granary

A kitchen and breakfast room are on the east side of the living room. This was the granary, the 22 inch wide boards of which are now used to create a beautiful pine board floor in the living room.

On the west side of the living room is a library and den and behind it the utility room where the furnace and pump are located.

An old stable on the far west side of the barn will eventually be a workshop if Ed has his way. Stephanie would like to keep some animals, perhaps a couple of goats, a cow and some horses. Perhaps they'll reach a compromise and have a little of the space for both.

Two sets of stairs, one on each side of the living room, go to the upper floor. They are joined only by two long beams. The living/dining area was once the threshing floor. The wagon of grain was driven into the area by a team of horses. Four hooks were lowered from the two big beams, still in their original place at either end of the barn.

When each corner of the rack was hooked securely the

horse would be hitched to a rope connected to a big wooden wheel. The wheel would then turn and wind up the four ropes to lift the rack to the loft level.

Work to be done

These slings are one of the most interesting features of the Smith home, a constant reminder of the past blending with the present.

The second floor areas each hold two bedrooms and bathrooms. A sauna is planned but is expected to be one of the last things completed.

The loft area (third level) will one day be completed as a guest room and reached by a spiral staircase.

There is still much work to be done and the prospects look exciting. Everything so far, with the exception of the fireplace and septic tank, has been done by the Smiths assisted by Ed's father, D. Smith is retired from the construction business and has given much encouragement and technical know-how. "My mother and father were the only people who really encouraged us to go ahead with this project," Ed says.

Ed installed the furnace and did all the plumbing and electrical work himself. He learned to do plumbing by reading a 39 cent book he borrowed from a friend.

"You don't realize how little you know until you try to do it," says Stephanie. The Smiths have certainly proven this hasn't stopped them.

Ed discovered an old mill in Brockville owned by his great-great-great grandfa-

ther in 1810. He plans to bring the remaining stones from the mill to face the bottom half of the fireplace.

Basics completed

Barn wood will be used to complement the paint and

brick as decor on some of the inside walls.

The barn doors will be rebuilt to be used as shutters for the large windows.

Everything so far has been done from scratch, using as

much of the existing materials as possible.

The past two years have been spent doing the basics. Now they will have the fun of completing their 2,000 square feet of home in the country.



KERRY SMITH SITS on the hearth of the 20 foot high fireplace in the middle of the Smith home. The wooden wheel used in threshing operations is shown at the top of the picture.



WHAT WAS AT ONE TIME the granary is now the Smith kitchen and breakfast room. Shown in the kitchen from left, are Simon, Stephanie, Kerry and Ed Smith. The huge barn beams are all in their original positions.



TWO OF THE HOOKS lowered from the beams to raise the grain rack to the loft level are shown here. Kerry is standing in the dining room of the 100-year-old barn / house.

Obituary

F.J. Wilson funeral Nov. 9

Freeman John Wilson passed away Tuesday, Nov. 6 and funeral service was held Friday, Nov. 9 at Lee and Custance funeral home, Guelph. Rev. Ronald Courtenay, minister of Westminster-St. Paul's Presbyterian church, Guelph, conducted the services. Burial was in Eden Mills cemetery.

Pallbearers were Garnet Norrish, Clifford Norrish, Lloyd Marsden, Ross Gordon, Dean Taylor and Douglas Murray.

Mr. Wilson was born in Eden Mills and farmed in Nassagaweya all his life until

moving to Guelph seven years ago. He had worked for the University of Guelph for the past six years.

He was the husband of the late Eleanor Ann Murray and father of Ruth (Mrs. Donald Archibald) of Acton and Rae Wilson of R.R. 5, Rockwood, brother of Vera (Mrs. Stan Norrish) of Guelph and dear friend of Mrs. Edith Kirk.

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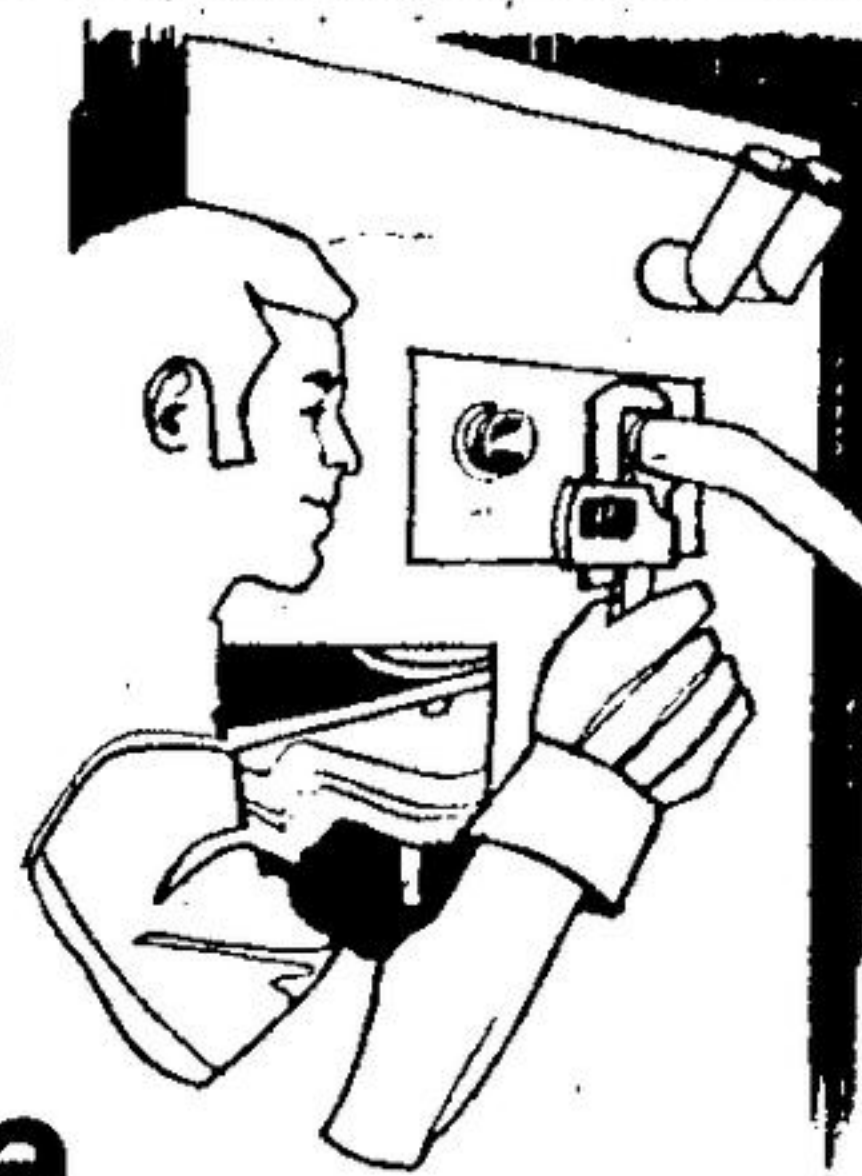
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If you have any questions, phone Mr. Steadman, collect, by November 26, at Canadian Appliance Manufacturers Association (416) 962-3931.



THIS IS ONE OF TWO sets of stairs leading to the second floor. Each area has two bedrooms and a bathroom. A third level, the loft, will some day be a guest room.