

Restoration of a log cabin in photographs



When the early colonists arrived in Canada the first homes were one-room shanties with a shed roof. As soon as possible, the permanent settlers erected more substantial homes.

Where woods and trees were plentiful, the log cabin was the most common type of living quarters. Upon the arrival of a band of pioneers the forests soon echoed to the ring of their axes. After the trees were felled, men and boys rolled them to the cabin site and cut them into logs of the desired length.

Logs for cabins were usually twelve to fifteen feet long. They were notched at the ends to make them fit securely one over the other. Four logs were laid carefully to form the foundation and, over this, "punchons" or logs split into thick slabs, were laid if the cabin was to have a floor. These were usually chosen of pine slabs.

Chinking

Side walls were laid one log upon the other to a height of seven or eight feet. Space between the logs was filled with pieces whittled from the heart of the timber and wedged in snugly. A rough mortar or tough clay was then plastered over the cracks, a process called "chinking" or "daubing." The roof was made by laying poles from gable to gable and covering them with clapboards shaped with the axe, fastened down by weight poles. Wooden pegs were used and later, hand-made nails.

The door was usually made of heavy wooden slabs fastened to a wooden latch. Attached to the latch was a string of deerskin which hung outside the door. When this was pulled, the latch was drawn up from its bracket inside and the door could be opened. The latchstring hanging outside the door was the symbol of pioneer hospitality. It was an open invitation to anyone who came along, to walk in and

make himself at home. At night the string was drawn in and the door securely barred.

Replaced

Glass was difficult to procure on the early frontiers and windows were kept small. At one end of the cabin a fireplace was built, with chimney made of logs and chinked as the walls were. Stones formed the hearth. Usually as time progressed, the log houses were pulled down and replaced by ones of stone or brick. Only a few of the original pioneer farm homes remain standing today and are mostly found on country farms.

Generations later, Canadians are looking at the life and customs of their pioneer ancestry. The last few years have shown a reach into the past. Log houses, still intact, are being purchased and restored. Some are moved to other areas as museum exhibits, others as colorful antique emporiums.

The one seen in photographs on this page has been purchased, taken down and moved. When completely finished it will be the future home of Josef Drenters, the new owner.

Background

The interesting old building belonged to an early Canadian family named Stiffler. It was located in Puslinch township, three miles south of Guelph. Through research, Mr. Drenters learned it had been built by Pennsylvania Dutch workmen around 1838. Workmanship and construction of the building points to a continental-type carpentry.

Today it stands proudly, a monument to the past, on property close beside the Rockwood Academy in the village of Rockwood. Step by step the pictures take you through the seven stages from dismantling to resurrecting. No ① the tattered building as it stood in 1973. No. ② the roof and outside clapboards were removed. No. ③ logs were numbered, taken down separately, and trucked to Academy property where they were piled neatly. No. ④ foundation was begun in spring, '73. No. ⑤ with the aid of a cant hook Josef Drenters rolls logs across to front of building over ceiling. No. ⑥ the builder is seen placing the joist. No. ⑦ the house as it stood in January 1974. All logs were raised by December of '73. In January '74 the roof was on, requiring only that glass be put in windows, doors placed and spaces between logs, chinked.

