

No more three Rs!

# Woodside school converted into home

By Pat Wilson

A controversial issue affecting the residents of the fourth and fifth lines of Erin Township concerned a choice of building site. Some wanted it on the Fourth Line, some on the Fifth. After much altercation, an independent study was carried out and a choice was made. The project would be constructed midway between the two lines on the Fifth Concession, Erin.

Sound familiar? The noises are similar but the project is not a hydro corridor in 1976 but a schoolhouse in 1888, specifically S.S. No. 10 Erin Township, popularly known as Woodside School which functioned on this site from 1888 until closing its doors in 1965. It is now the charming residence of John and Audrey Cameron, R.R. 2, Acton.

\$100 cost

The property for the new school was taken from the northwest corner of the McDonald farm on the Fifth Line, now owned by Bruce Leitch. It cost \$100. The new building was constructed of bricks manufactured on the Given farm on the Sixth Line and the schoolyard was fenced at a cost of \$5.90.

Over the years the school served not only as an educational centre but also as a community centre. A Literary Society flourished here at one point and many were the social get-togethers held within its four walls.

Some of the pupils trudged to school along the original Five Sideroad which wound through swamp, up hill and down dale from the Sixth to the Fourth Line while others, like the Denny brothers walked through stands of hardwood and over snow-covered fields to gain an education.

Many other names well-known in Acton and district were associated with the little one-room school. Swackhamer, McIntyre, Binnie and M. Z. Bennett are but a few.

Warm welcome

Wonderful things are still happening in the old red brick schoolhouse at the top of the hill on Five Sideroad. Step inside the doorway to the former cloakroom, and you are greeted by the warm welcome found wherever the quality of life is good.

This warmth of feeling which engulfs the former school undoubtedly stems from the affection which its owners feel for it. Since they bought it three years ago this Valentine's Day, they have given unstintingly of their time and talents to its restoration.

Although the project is not yet complete, much has been accomplished. The single schoolroom has been transformed into a compact two-bedroom home with a tremendous feeling of spaciousness.

Most of the work undertaken to date has been indoors, Audrey tells us. "This spring we'll put shutters on and do the landscaping but we don't want to spoil the schoolhouse effect at all."

Project

Audrey has done much of the decorating herself from stippling the plaster ceilings with rolled up newspapers to placing the beams in position. Single-handed, she even pulled down an inside wall erected by previous owners in order to enlarge the sitting room.

As you discuss her project with her, you cannot help feeling how fortunate it was

for SS No. 10 Erin Township, that she was the person to undertake its conversion. Having restored two homes in England previously, one of which was a 15th century cottage with all its inherent problems, she could see the potential afforded by the schoolhouse the minute she laid eyes on it. Immediately she sensed what was needed.

When she and John became the proud owners of the one acre and twelve perches on lot five, concession five, and the eighty-five year old building, they moved in at once and set to work.

Since a modern kitchen had been installed on the south side of the building by the former owners, the Camerons' first undertaking was the removal of the little lean-to shed at the southwest of the building. In its place they built a cedar deck overlooking the beautiful wooded valley to the rear of the property. Along the wall against which the shed was formerly propped, sliding glass doors were installed. Now the Camerons and their guests can sit in the dining room and feast their eyes while they savour their meal.

Barnboard

Like the spacious sitting room which it adjoins, the dining room is paneled. Barnboard has been used and is most effectively complemented by woven Scandinavian drapes in beige and brown tones. The original wainscoting has been preserved and painted a neutral tone but it is Audrey's ultimate aim to refinish this.

As you walk from the front of the house to the back along the red-carpeted centre hallway which leads past two bedrooms on the left and an ultra-modern bathroom on the right, your eye is drawn to the rear wall of the house. For here crackles and dances a glorious log fire in a raised hearth extending the width of

the sitting room. This fireplace Audrey designed herself and had built of reclaimed brick, which is approximately the same age as the brick in the building. Comfortable chintz-covered chesterfields invite one to curl up at the fireside and enjoy not only the warmth but the flickering flames and lighted candles reflected in the copper pieces placed nearby and in the highly-polished floor which has been left uncovered to reveal its lustrous beauty.

For dancing

Interestingly, this floor was laid in 1945 by a number of the older boys attending the school who wanted to have a floor suitable for dancing. The donated their labor but the wood cost them \$37.50, a sum which would buy only a few of the boards today. The original floor can still be found beneath this.

When the Camerons put in the sliding glass doors in the

dining room and the fireplace in the sitting room, they had an opportunity not only to examine the construction of their home but also to take a peak into its past.

Blackboard

The walls are three bricks thick at the bottom and two bricks thick all the way up, tied in every two feet with a two by four. On the wall at the back of the house behind the present fireplace, they found the old blackboard. On its surface was a wreath of maple leaves and the inscription, "God Save the King, God Bless Canada".

Vista

In the north wall of the sitting room, a new, narrow bay window has replaced a doorway against which easterly winds formerly heaped snowbanks which made access difficult. This window overlooks the fields of the Leitch farm to the east. To preserve this vista, Audrey has refrained

from using curtains just as she has on the kitchen window which looks out on the beautiful old beech tree to the southwest.

Here cardinals and other feathered friends come to enjoy the tasty treats proffered them by the kind residents of "Woodside".

Wherever one looks from this property the view is magnificent. When one compares the natural beauty surrounding this schoolhouse with the concrete sterility of modern school grounds one realizes the price of progress. Here there are glorious vistas to stir the soul, unless, of course, the proposed hydro corridor should cut across the fields and mar the landscape. Like many others the Camerons hope this will not come to pass.

Come spring, Audrey and John will be busy working outdoors on weekends when they are not golfing at the Erin Club to which they have

belonged for years. If you are a former "Woodside" pupil and want to take a step back in time, just stop and say "Hello" when you're passing.

The Camerons will be delighted to show you, your children, or your grandchildren, where once you went to school.



UPDATED BUT unspoiled, the old Woodside School retains its charm and on the exterior looks much as it did when it closed its doors to pupils in 1965.



AUDREY CAMERON has used pastel colours, vertical stripes and only a few carefully chosen ornaments to make the smaller rooms of her home appear larger.

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## Speeding fines up

Milton OPP officers issued a "slight increase" in speeding tickets over the first full weekend since the new provincial speed limits came into force Feb. 1.

Constable Larry Scott cautioned, however, that the increase may have been due to more highway traffic due to the sunny and windy weather.

He explained what the new law means to Highway 401 motorists, for example, where the speed limit is now 60.

If and OPP officer clocks you at 70 miles per hour and pulls you over, your 70 m. p. h. speed will cost you \$13 fine but you won't lose any demerit points.

And if the policeman stops you for going 75 m. p. h. on the freeway, the fine is \$2 for each mile over the limit which comes to \$30, plus an additional \$3 in court costs.

As well, the motorist clocked at 75 would lose three demerit points.

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