

# Sayers' Mill

By BONNIE MULLEN

Memories of the old television show Green Acres come to mind as Lena Grierson recounts how she purchased and rescued her historically significant farm on the 5<sup>th</sup> Line of Nassagaweya Township, now part of the Town of Milton, in 1986.

"It was certainly a handyman's delight and I was really a city girl. I grew up in Sweden and I lived in the city all my life, but I spent time with my grandparents in the country and was raised to figure out problems. Where I come from houses are handed down from generation to generation. They are cared for and in good shape. In preparation for my move to the country I rented a basement apartment on a farm for two years where I could keep my dogs and horses," she explained. "I chose this place because I liked the feeling, the character of an old house. I like the wood doors, the wood trim and the wide baseboards. It wasn't until much later I learned its history."

The house had been tenanted for many years and in much need of repair. The roof leaked, live wires stuck out of the floor where a stove once had been, and there were truckloads of debris both inside and out to be removed. Old car wrecks and tires were scattered around and the barn had two walls missing! Everything was an emergency when the new owner took possession in September with winter looming. The first priority was fencing to keep the horses in.

Through a neighbour, Grierson met a handyman named Pierre who proved over the years to be a godsend.

"That first year I was flying by the seat of my pants. I was like a Walt Wingfield tale. The weekends were such hard work I looked forward to Mondays back in my studio in the city."

The property was known by old timers as Sayers' Mill. For 75 years a mill had operated on the property. In 1847 Thomas Easterbrook built the mill that he sold to Henry Cargill. The 1877 atlas shows a stream, a pond, five buildings and a mill. Cargill moved on to Bruce County and sold the place to Peter Sayers who added steam power to the mill in 1895. There were 10 to 12 employees and bunkhouses for workmen. One of four Sayers' children, Frank (who was born on the farm in 1879) took over the mill from his father and sold it to Duncan Campbell in 1917. Campbell also had the mill in Moffat. Lena Grierson has been told her house was actually comprised of a smaller house that was built on the property, plus another one moved from behind and a summer kitchen addition that has since become her living room. She believes from talking to a former resident and a long time neighbour there were in fact two mills - one of stone, and another frame.

With board and batten exterior, insulation, drywall, flooring and a woodstove added the summer

kitchen became the living room. When the pipes burst new plumbing was installed. The kitchen was totally redesigned, adding a door and counters specific to the owner's height. Pierre built the pine cabinets, a pine floor was laid, as well as some terra cotta tile and bricks, and a wood cookstove purchased from Mennonites became the focal point. The city girl soon learned how to buy a tractor at auction and drive it home without brakes, as well as other useful skills like roofing, bricklaying and tiling. The old bank barn collapsed one windy night. The remnants of an old orchard including apple trees and berry bushes delighted the new owner, who embraced the wildness of her land and cut trails for walking and riding.

"I was raised with woodstoves. You can't beat the taste of food cooked on one and the feeling of the heat on a cold winter's night. The kitchen was the biggest job. With my parents coming to visit every two years I had a deadline for myself."

Two bedrooms became three, using wasted hall space and vintage doors, trim and flooring purchased from Al Bousefield, a salvager located one concession over. A second floor laundry, needed storage and closet space were added. A new barn was built using old windows and designed in keeping with the character of the house. Since the early days of responding to emergency repairs and



House at Sayers Mills

replacements, careful thought and planning has gone into creating a comfortable home that brings pleasure to its owner.

planned to make her life here for the long haul.

She has since married Bill and they now share their home with two daughters, Lisa and Hannah.

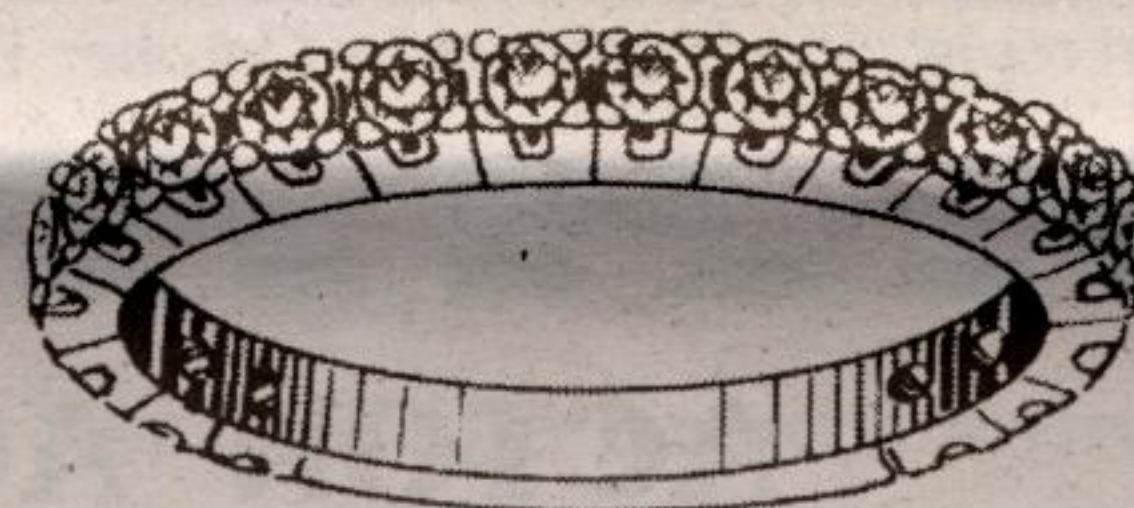
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