

Rockwood's historic Strange house now B&B

Original 4 room home built in 1840

By Rebecca Ring

The well-known Strange House on Main St. S. and Cobblestone Pl. in Rockwood is becoming a top-notch Bed and Breakfast. A Place in Time is due to open this week. Owner Krista Pollett has been putting the finishing touches on the newly redecorated and renovated century and a half old stone house. Three bedrooms are available for guests, one with a private bath and two with a shared. They are named for the past names of the house: PineHill Grove, The Cedars, and Wishwood.

According to Deb Quaile's book, Rockwood: A Mosaic of Memories, the house was originally built by Henry Strange, sometimes known as Colonel or Squire Strange. He was born in the West Indies in 1815, grew up in Kent, England and moved to Canada with his parents and sisters around 1830. He inherited land in Rockwood where he built his beautiful stone house. He was a businessman with limekilns, a gristmill and quarries, and was appointed as Magistrate of Eramosa. He married Elizabeth Ann Malins, "a woman of a noted English family." The house began as four rooms in 1840 and was expanded in the 1860's as their family grew to 14 children.

The couple was accustomed to the finer things in life, so no expense was spared. The best stone was used from his nearby quarry,

and the "glowing pine floors" were no doubt hewn from local trees. Pollett ripped up carpet and discovered the beautiful floors, which she refinished. She restored the ornate Italian moldings on the 14-foot ceilings, fixture bases and hallways. There are eight fireplaces in the house, with some operational. The ones that are not are tastefully decorated with a plethora of candles providing the desired warmth and glow of fire. Strange traded food and shelter in his heated stone barn for this masonry work done by Italians, who were laid off in winter from their work on railway bridge construction. The barn was heated by a chimney rising through all the floors to keep Strange's animals as comfortable as his family.

The entire house now has Pollett's creative and artistic stamp throughout. She built an island in the kitchen from



WELCOMING KITTY: The new Bed & Breakfast in Rockwood is family and pet friendly. Nash the resident cat makes herself available to greet guests warmly to A Place in Time. - Rebecca Ring Photo

window frames that were removed from the house, and tempered glass and wood from Habitat for Humanity's Reuse Centre in Guelph. "I reuse everything. If I can turn something into a usable item or art, why throw it in the garbage?" she says. Her unique artwork hangs

on the walls throughout the house. She uses old broken glass and paint to create interesting abstract pieces. She made frames from wood salvaged from repairing windowsills. She made unique three-dimensional scenes from concrete, rock, wood and moss, which hang on the dining room walls. "I made these from the chipped stone left from building an archway at a previous house. It took me one year. It was one big scene but I had to cut it into four pieces to move it." The rock and wood art is certainly a perfect fit for the stone house in this village.

Pollett will serve breakfast in the dining room, which will consist of homemade specialties such as fruit crepes, French toast, and her signature lemon loaf, in addition to bacon, eggs, omelets, etc. "I also make a mean cheesecake, with toppings like mango-brandy, and the best gingerbread

cookies," says Pollett. She will happily meet any individual dietary needs, such as diabetic or vegetarian fare. These delights will be served on her collection of Royal Albert "Lavender Rose" china, which she began collecting as a teenager; "I've never used it and now I finally can. Now I know why I wanted it." The dining room features a long table and antique furniture, such as the quaint teacart.

The three bedrooms are bright, airy, romantic and comfortable. The private bathroom for the main floor bedroom, or Wishwood, is truly a romantic vision. Pollett converted a spare room into the bathroom. She restored and moved the original claw foot tub into its centre, beside a working fireplace. It also has a standup shower, with a curtain that hangs from an encircling frame. The tub even has its original copper drain and faucet.

The impressive split staircase leads to the upstairs bedrooms: The Cedars and PineHill Grove, which share the upstairs bathroom. Two of the three rooms have TVs and Internet hook-up, but PineHill Grove is a technological escape, having neither. It overlooks the pines along the Eramosa River. "To have cable hook-up in that room, I would have had to cut down one of these gorgeous, tall pines. I said forget it. I refuse to cut down trees for cable. In fact, I intend to plant more," says Pollett.

The main floor sitting rooms feature African-themed colours and art, which she began collecting while in South Africa. Last year, she went there to help kids raise funds to attend school. She also taught the children arts and crafts. "When kids create, they feel good about themselves. Even if they think their creation looks bad, I help them stand back, take a different view and see it in a new light," she says.

The whole house is very bright and welcoming, with lots of large windows throughout. She will have to replace some of the windows for energy efficiency but, of course, has creative plans for the old windows. In the upstairs foyer, she will hang them on the four walls with landscape paintings behind them, "to give you the feeling of being outside."

Pollett has designed A Place in Time to be an oasis, for individuals, couples and families. The house is pet friendly, with Nash the resident cat on hand to welcome guests. "This house is meant to be shared. What we build today does not compare. This house has a history and is filled with stories, not to mention the beauty and quality of the craftsmanship." Watch for the grand opening and launch of the website.



ROCKWOOD'S PLACE IN TIME: Krista Pollett has turned Rockwood's landmark Strange House on Main St. S. into a beautiful and welcoming Bed and Breakfast called A Place in Time. - Rebecca Ring Photo

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