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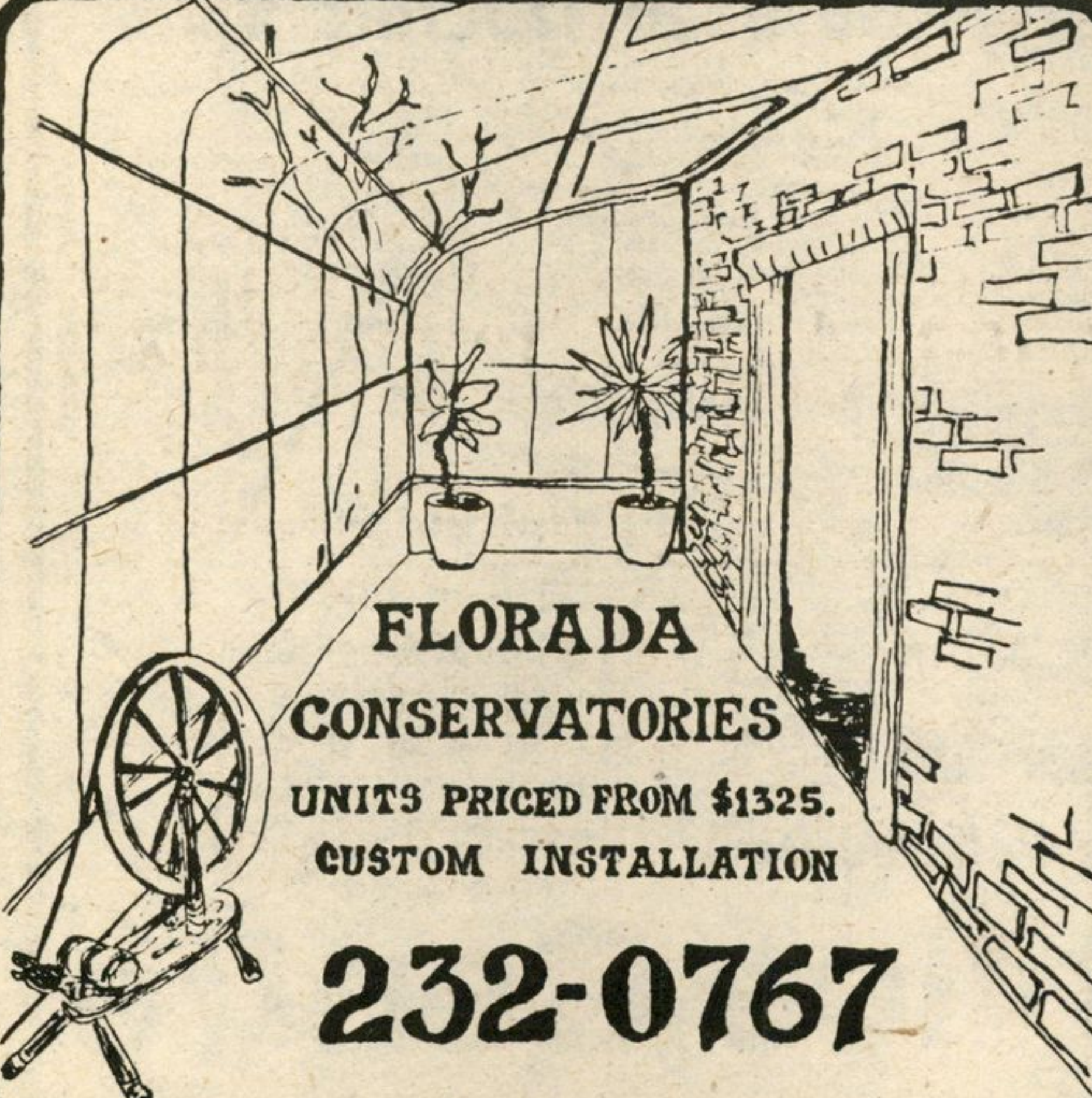
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Cornerstone

by Paul Rodier

Paul Rodier, Castor Review layout director, is an avid student of old homes and their historical attributes. Several years ago, he spent a summer photographing and cataloguing old homes west of Ottawa for the federal government. In this issue, Paul begins a series of articles on old homes and buildings in the Castor area. "These buildings are our heritage. They can tell us not only about who came before us but of events which helped determine today's society. They should be preserved," he says, adding, "Their historical value is not always obvious, there can be a lot hidden under stucco and aluminum siding." Ideas on subjects for the column Cornerstone, should be addressed to the Castor Review, Box 359, Russell, K0A 3B0.

KINKAID HOUSE — Built By A Slave, Home to Many

One of the finest examples of pioneer stonework in this area commands a low rise, overlooking the banks of the East Castor River, three miles south of Russell. Built by a negro slave, and the centre point of many family histories, the Kinkaid house stands as symbol of traditional architecture and individual success in eastern Ontario.

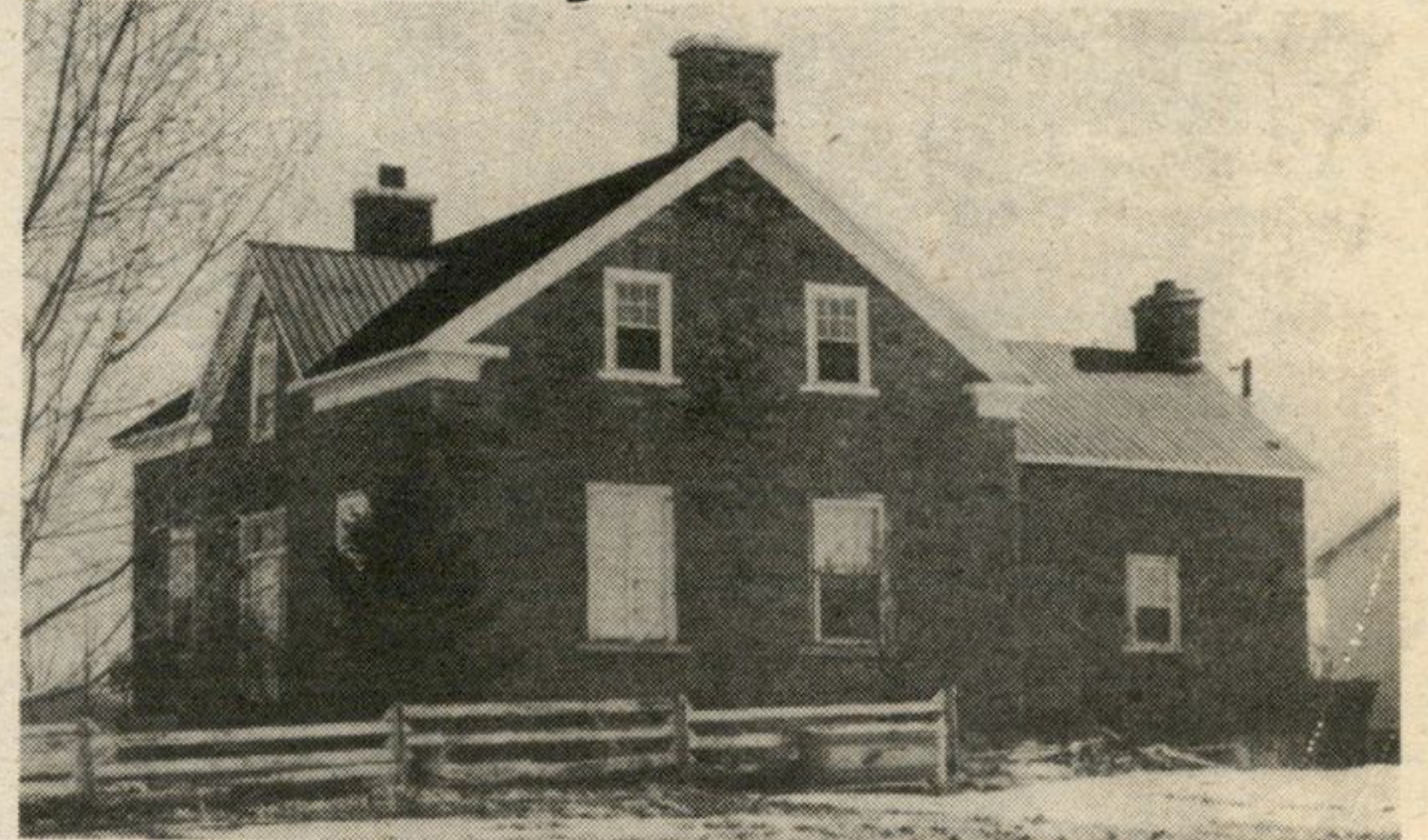
In the Mid 1800's, the resounding echoes of axes and the crashing of felled trees were common sounds as farmers cleared patches of land for cultivation. In this changing landscape the routine was simple: build a small log house for shelter, clear land, sow some crops, clear land, harvest the crops and prepare for winter. After a relatively short period of time the early settlers found themselves in their log houses, on a high point of the farm, with several fields cleared around them. It was time to start thinking about a more permanent house on the homestead.

In the mid 1860's, Alex MacGregor, the owner of the 200 acres around the northwest half of lot 3 on concession 3, decided to hire a stonemason from Winchester to build his home on the hill facing the East Castor River. All the materials for a house were readily available on the farm. More than sufficient stone had been unearthed in the fields; the lime for the mortar was kilned from the limestone not far from the house; the sand was available from the river bed and the pine forest across the river yielded the required lumber.

While Alex MacGregor busied himself with his chores, the burning of the limestone and the gathering of the sand, the craftsmen worked on the house. The stonemason, Isaac Johnston, a burly negro who had escaped his slavery in the United States, chiselled the stone and skillfully placed each stone while the carpenter and his pit boy felled trees and produced solid, pit-sawn lumber for the beams of the house.

By fall, the mason had assembled the courses of stone on the 1 1/2 storey farm house and the carpenter had finished hand-crafting all the windows and doors of clear pine. The new home for Alex MacGregor and his family was ready.

It stood as a monument to an era in personal history as well as the architectural history of southeastern Ontario. The



medium pitch gable roof, the centre gable plan, the light panels around the large front door and the five foot high windows are some of the architectural features of a Classic Revival, Ontario farm house.

Details such as the treatment of the eaves and the gable ends were optional and were generally hallmarks of the original designer or builder of the house. In this case, the eaves and gables were boxed in with return and an added frieze board to increase the depth. Another signature on this house was the combined effort of the mason and carpenter in finishing a triangular window in the centre gable.

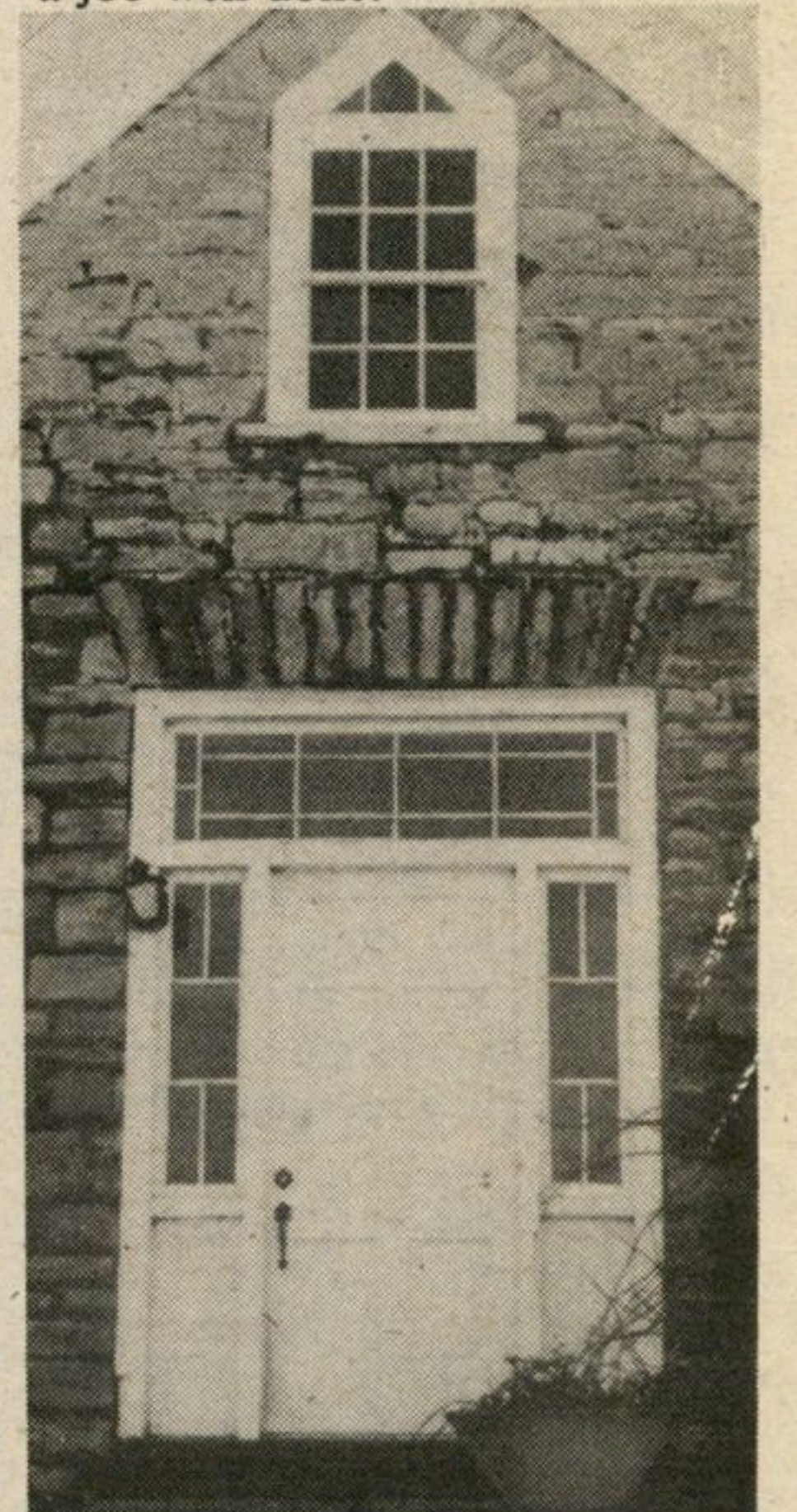
As the outside of the house stood proudly against the years of weathering, it acted as the cocoon for the ever changing lives of many people. Lengthy discussions about politics, plans for marriages, eulogies of friends, and excited discussions on names for newborn children took place as the full spectrum of happiness and sorrow were felt by the families who lived within the walls.

When Alex MacGregor died, his son John took over the responsibilities of running the farm but eventually moved away and the house was rented for a period. Along came Ray C. Dillabough with the purchase price tucked in his back pocket and the farm became his property in 1917. However, his responsibilities of teaching, principalling, and encouraging students through the entrance of Russell Public School made it necessary to move into the village. Once again the house was out for rental and a share agreement with Adelard Martel kept the farm working for the last 18 years that Ray Dillabough owned it.

Walter Kinkaid, the brother-in-law of the well-remembered local educator, and his wife Ina pur-

chased the farm in 1947. They lived on the farm, — which came complete with the agreement with Adelard Martel, working the land and raising their children. Time passed, Adelard bought his own farm, the children grew up, the Kinkaid's moved into the village, and their son Norman became the owner of the property fondly known as Stoney Haven. Norman Kinkaid, wife Dorothy, and family, now live in this 115-year-old house on the farm facing the East Castor River where he raises beef cattle, keeps bees as well as works in Ottawa.

The times have changed drastically, both socially and economically but the face of the house remains the same. The weathered stone home stands as proudly today as it did the day Alex MacGregor shook hands with Isaac Johnston in thanks for a job well done.



Detail of Front Door and Centre Gable Window
 (Paul Rodier Photo)

R. William Lyon

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