

Cornerstone

By Paul Rodier

The Atienza home

"Maison monumentale" regenerated

Living in a house that is 125 years old is an ambitious if not a frightening experience.

The hours of patching and repairing can quickly drive away the pride of owning an "antique" home. The cost alone would scare most people off.

Not so for the Atienza family who tackled the restoration of a stone house near Edwards just north of the Metcalfe-Russell road. The stone house had been empty for a short period when they bought it in 1972 along with 160 acres of surrounding

farmland.

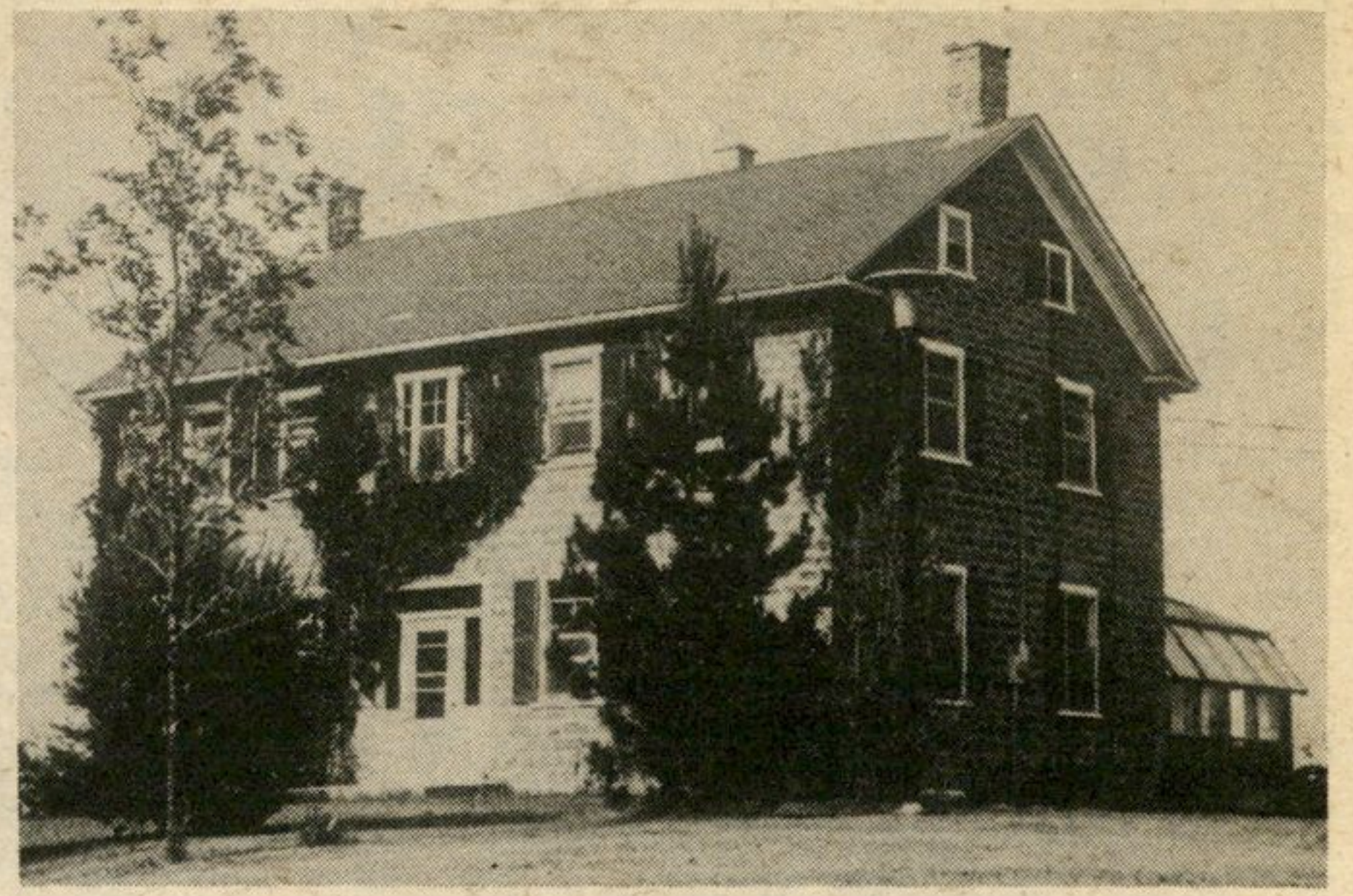
Now, with restoration and improvements almost complete, Francis and his wife Maria are enjoying the fruits of their labor. As the largest item in their impressive collection of antiques, the house is a fine example of the classic yet simple style known as "la maison monumentale".

The style is noted for the symmetry of dimensions and the simplicity of lines. Other features are the uniform size of all windows in the building and the lack of superfluous ornamentation. It is the basis for many other house designs because of its uncluttered geometry which lends itself easily to modification.

The house sits imposingly on its grassy rise — concession 10, lots 19 and 20 of Osgoode Township. Here, it has stood since its construction in the 1850's for United Empire Loyalist William F. Kearns. And here he raised his family, farmed and conducted church services in the large common room of the second floor. They eventually grew out of Edwards and moved to Montreal.

The Rolfe family rented the farm for a number of years then, at the turn of the century, bought the property outright. They stayed on the farm until the 1940's when ownership was transferred to the Lafrance family who farmed it until a decade ago.

Francis Atienza was looking for an "antique" when he bought the farm. A Spanish literature professor at Carleton University, he was not much interested in the land but it went with the house. Since that time, he, wife Maria and the three children have lived through the inconvenience of



The Atienza home, today...and pre-1900 with Kearns family



Restored, recessed window. Pine sill is 30 inches deep. (Paul Rodier photo)

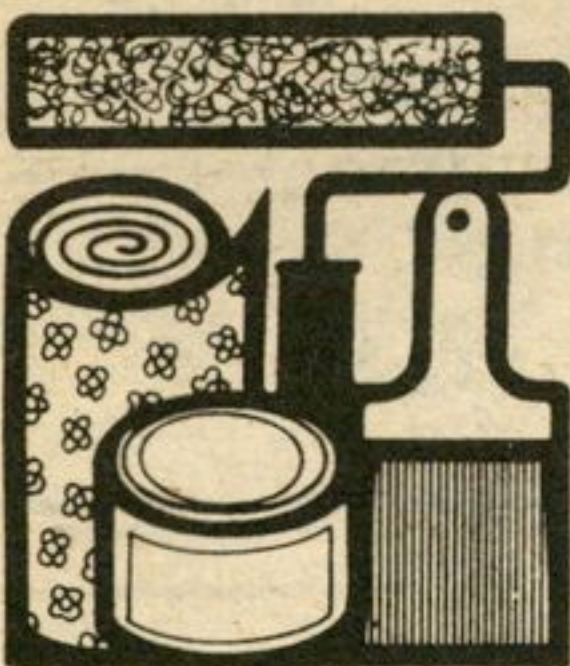
restoring the house to make it comfortable.

At the same time, they were careful to preserve its original character with the help of today's technology and 125 years of building experience. Through research of building techniques, lengthy consultations with architects, hours of family discussion and a strong appreciation for the craftsmanship of yesteryear, the Atienza's regenerated a house that could well have become a Pandora's Box into a comfortable living environment.

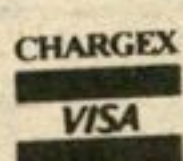
On the outside, the cut stone, twin chimneys, roof, windows,

sills, boxed cornice and shutters all strictly maintain "la maison monumentale" style. The one exception is the addition of a solar heated solarium where the summer kitchen porch once was.

It is the interior of the house that most dramatically expresses the Atienza appreciation for the artistic value of early craftsmanship. They have systematically restored all the window, door and floor mouldings; returned the floors to exposed pine boards; exposed ceiling beams and rearranged rooms. The result is a comfortable living environment in the midst of a cherished "antique".




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