

An Interesting Find

The Greendale Estate and the Unusual Octagonal Building

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Adamant about heritage, art and culture Mrs. Booth began to tell me about how she came upon such an interesting home and outbuilding as we sat at a wooden table one sunny morning.

Practiced in flipping old homes, re-storing Victorian homes and an old school house to their former glory, Karen Booth and her husband came upon this particular property while driving through North Dumfries. At the state it was in it seemed almost unimaginable to restore it to its past beauty. But determined to take on the challenge Karen and her husband bought the property in 1999.

The home was then restored to a liveable state as it was mentioned by Karen that there was no plumbing in the house before they had bought it. In 2003 they moved in and by 2004 it was completed. Mrs. Booth mentions that as she was cleaning up the front yard that was dishevelled and overgrown she looked up at the house, "it was as if it was smiling at me saying thanks for what we were doing".

The home was scrubbed, cleaned, fixed and today it is truly a diamond in the rough. It was featured in a house tour a few years back and has been revered by history and architectural buffs in the area. When shown around the home I noticed the rich wood and large windows, spotted by numerous paintings carefully chosen by Mrs. Booth. The home was filled with fashionable décor fitting with the style of the era. Karen explains that she and husband restored the home as to what it would originally look like.

As she took me around outside to show me her gardens I saw the sign above the door spelling out Greendale. When asking about the name Karen told me that it was called so by the early owners and has ever since kept its name.

Soon I came upon the outbuilding I was quite interested in. Not quite like any building I've seen before, octagonal in shape and restored to quite a pleasant and quaint appearance. Ross Anderson, a heritage consultant, previously performed an architectural report on the building in order to receive a grant from the Waterloo Heritage Foundation. The Waterloo Heritage Foundation provided for a third of the restoration which can be seen today.

The octagonal building is very rare in its kind. Many suggestions of its purpose had been made, some suggesting its usage as a poultry house others a hog house. However, with further research it had been discovered that

the octagonal stone structure was initially a farm building and afterwards a blacksmith shop.

The building is constructed of rubble accompanied by a natural finish that was combined with either a later form of mortar or an early form of concrete. The building stands at one storey and had two windows made from sheet glass.

Interestingly enough, the octagonal shop was not only a matter of convenience, as its selling point was that no small corners would have to be swept, it also had theological significance. The Quakers, Shakers, and Holy Rollers, who were various religious groups, solely believed that the open interior would "keep the devil from hiding in corners".

The cone roof and eight panels need not posts or beams and are self-supporting which enabled the owner to use the area without restrictions from intruding supports; a trend that was used between the years 1850 and 1900. The idea of the octagonal structure was claimed to be popularized by a man by the name of Orson Fowler. In 1848, he published a book called *A Home for All: Of the Gravel Wall and Octagon Mode of Building*. Within his book he praises the ingenuity of the shape. Orson was born and lived in New York and it is probable that the style easily passed over into Southern Ontario.

Research has placed its construction at circa 1861. Originally, the structure was used as a storage shed and barn by the Sudden family. The land to which the octagonal structure stands upon, Lot 19, Concession 8, was apparently sold to John Sudden by the Honourable William Dickson on February 10th in 1846. However, this transaction is not clearly recorded until January 13th, 1862 when the land is deeded to John Sudden by Honourable Robert Dickson, William's son. A month later the land was sold to Thomas Sudden and his family which according to the Tremaine's Map of 1861 were already living on the land. Thomas Sudden and his wife Jane were both born in England and immigrated to Upper Canada where they had eight children.

On May 30th, 1877 Thomas Sudden passed away. In his will he gives his son William Lots 19 and 20 on Concession 8. Six years later William Sudden and his wife deed the land to farmer John Taylor of the Township of Kinloss in the County of Bruce. He moved to North Dumfries that year. He was an English Methodist and emigrated from England in 1854. His wife Jannet was born in Ontario and together they had nine children.

During the time the Taylor family owned the property that housed the octagonal stone building it had been used as blacksmith shop (1883-1955). It was speculated that it would have been an alternate form of occupation. Extra money could be provided from shoeing horses as well as fixing farming equipment. It was also suggested that the structure served occasionally as a carriage shed which could store a buggy, wagon or other carriages as well as a horse or cow. Tools and storage would also be stored here.

Conveniently, the location was situated between Ayr and Galt. Its usage as a quick pit stop for travelling visitors with horse and buggy as well as perhaps a centre for emergency repairs in the community made the building



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an important place in the surrounding area.

In 1899, John Taylor passed away and deeded his land to his son John Taylor Jr. who passed away in 1943. The land was given to Mary Ella Taylor his wife who passed away three years later.

An imprint of black ink in stencilled letters outlines the name J. Taylor. It was placed on the left side of the window sill.

In consideration of the great architectural and historical significance of the structure the octagonal stone building was designated by the North Dumfries Municipal Heritage Committee on August 12th, 2004.

When asked about designation Mrs. Booth expressed the benefits it had given to her. When she and her husband were pondering over purchasing the property, the owner at the time was about to demolish the octagonal structure, an important piece of the property's history. She purchased the home in hopes of restoring it. She mentions that the designation gives her comfort that the building will not be in the same danger that it was on that day. The home and building provide education for future generations on the importance of heritage.

As this is written beautiful heritage homes are at risk. It's sad to find that they are left unwanted or untended when they are standing forms of the history of people who sacrificed their lives in their home country to make a place for us to live and in right respect it is only civil to keep them