

History of the House at 348 Ridge Rd.

Before the Village of Ridgeway ever was, a 200 acre parcel of land was deeded to Daniel Pound. There was a group of believers, who were called the "Friends," who were meeting in the area. Daniel Pound decided to deed them a 3 acre piece of land. They built a meeting house and a parsonage on this property, where the Memorial United Church is situated today.

As time went on, the Friends amalgamated with another church denomination, the Wesleyan Methodists. The 3 acre parcel became known as the Wesleyan Parsonage Lot. In the early 1870's, they decided they wanted to build a larger church building. The only way they could afford to do this, was by selling off the 2 half acre lots beside the plot for the church.

So a very young, Lt. Col. James Morin bought the two lots. There is very little documentation to verify that he actually built on each lot. I must surmise that Mr. R. M. Disher, whose historical books on the history of the Memorial United Church and his own autobiography, have been my sources of information and I have relied upon the fact he did extensive research. It could be that he got the information of who purchased the lots through the archives of the United Church. Mr. Disher was a long time resident of Ridgeway but moved away to the East coast and since has become somewhat forgetful in his declining years.

Anyway, there has long been a rumour that this house, at 348 Ridge Rd., was built by a local M.P. Lt. Col. Morin did serve as M.P.P. for the Liberal Party for several years. I have tried to substantiate this information, of who the builder and first owner was, through the Welland Land Registry Office and the Brock University Historical Records Library but to no avail. I was told by personnel that records were not kept as matter of course till later in the 19th century so whether it will ever be known for certain is hard to say. There is proof in the records at the Registry office that the house, next door at 356 Ridge Rd., was indeed built by Morin. But that house was built probably about 10 to 15 years later, in the early 1890's. And Morin never lived in that house because he moved to Welland in 1892, when he took up a position on a local school board. So my feelings are that he actually did build and live in this house while he served on various committees and councils in the Bertie Township.

So the historical accounts of past owners will begin with him.

Lt. Col. James E. Morin

He was born in 1849 in Limerick, Ireland. He was born the youngest of seven to Michael and Ellen (Nash) Morin. They immigrated to Allanburg, Ontario during the potato famine in Ireland. His father was a wagonmaker.

When James was 14 years old, he came to Ridgeway to apprentice in carpentry for Eber Cutler. Eber owned and ever growing building supply company and a mercantile store. In 2 years he decided James skills were better used in keeping charge over the mercantile store. Eventually, James also did the accounting for the building supply company.

In 1870, at 21 yrs. of age, he married Jeanette Willson, whose parents were United Empire Loyalists. They had 5 children; Frank, Clarence, Lucy, Mae and Elizabeth. A son, Frank, died at 39 years of age in what was Bridgeburg. He is interred at United Church graveyard along with his parents.

A year later he was appointed Bertie Township Clerk. He served in this capacity for 20 years. He was also listed as an insurance agent in Lovell's Directory in this year.

In 1879, he served on the Welland County Council as an auditor.

In 1883, he won the election for the Liberal Party for M.P.P. and held the position for several years. Meanwhile, he held his positions at the Cutler companies.

Morin had entered military training in Toronto while in his late teens. His Lieut-colonelcy was awarded after serving almost ten years in the military. He saw active service, in 1870, being in command of the detachment at Fort Erie during the Pigeon Hill affair.

As you might realize by now, he was a man of great energy and enthusiasm. He helped form the Ridgeway chapter of Masons. Being very interested in the educational system, he sat on the Ridgeway school board as chairman for a number of years. He also served as justice of the peace and license commissioner for 6 years.

Morin was asked to be on the Welland County school board in 1892. He took up the position and moved his family to Welland. Ten years later, he would die, after only a 2 day illness, of kidney failure. He was only 54 years of age.

Strangely enough, his wife would die a few years later after receiving a shock. She apparently was standing on the verandah of their Welland home, talking to someone. A doctor's horse and buggy were standing across the street. When all of a sudden, the horse bolted across her lawn and up the verandah steps. She fainted, and despite attempts to resuscitate her, she died.

I feel this house would've fit in very well with the Morin family lifestyle and his prominence in the community. This house would've served a large family well. As well as all the entertaining, that they would've done. Working for Mr. Cutler, he would've had access to excellent craftsmen and good materials. Of course, this is only my speculation.

Eber Cutler

Records show that Mr. Cutler did gain possession of this house and property in 1899. What the circumstances were I don't know. Maybe Morin sold the property to him once he decided to live in Welland. Relatives of Mr. Cutler say that he did not live at this place.

He was a very busy man who owned the biggest building company in the Niagara Peninsula. He owned a couple of planing mills here in Ridgeway and a grist mill. He had groups of men building homes in Port Colborne, Fort Erie, Niagara Falls and St. Catharines. He also had a brick factory on South Mill St. He had nephews employed, the Hanna Bros., who were skilled master wood craftsmen.

Eber Cutler was worth about 1.5 million dollars in today's standard of living. A great grand nephew, Joe Cutler, told me that the Hanna Bros. were fond of their drink. And their uncle was very fond of them, having only had 1 child, a son, himself. Apparently, they drank a lot of the money away.

Eber died in 1904, at the age of 74. His wife followed in a few years and records show that Jennie Hanna came into possession of the house in 1907.

Alvan H. Kilman

Mr. Kilman bought the house in 1910.

He was also a man of many interests as was Mr. Morin. He was married to Ida May Noble in 1876. They had 2 children, Leroy and Zella May.

Mr. Kilman was a school principal here in Ridgeway from 1879 till the early 1900's.

He also succeeded Mr. Morin in the position of Bertie Township clerk in 1891. He was also an insurance agent after Morin.

Mr. Kilman was quite an artist and critics were very impressed by his talent.

He is also mentioned in R.M. Disher's autobiography, "Robbie" as having a vast collection of butterflies and insects. He apparently kept these in display cases on the bookshelves that once lined almost the entire front room. He was quite devoted to the study of these creatures and had the largest collection in Ontario. He also had preserved animals on display and Mr. Disher, as an 8 or 9 year old, visited Mr. Kilman on occasion. He mentions longing to go up the stairs to the tower. But he never was given an invitation. You were supposed to see all the way to the lake from the tower.

Mr. Kilman passed away in 1915. The Ridgeway Public School has a memorial plaque in honor of his principalcy.

Francis Coppins

Francis Coppins was an American business man who came into possession of the house after Mrs. Kilman passed away in 1918. He lived here with his wife, a daughter (Dorothy) and his mother.

Mrs. Evelyn Smith Graf supplied me with the following information. Her father owned the butcher shop where the Chinese Restaurant now operates out of, across the street from the house.

She delivered the meat to the back door of the house every 2 or 3 days. Mr. and Mr. Snow were the cook and maintenance man. She remembers bringing the meat right in and sometimes she would stay to visit Dorothy, the Coppins invalid daughter. Dorothy had tuberculosis. She remembers the butler's pantry being there. And the grandmother, who was a very large woman, had her room, off the kitchen. This grandmother wouldn't leave her room and spent most of her days sitting in a chair, staring out the west window. She even had a special commode chair.

The house was a very cheerful home, Mrs. Graf recalls. Heavy, burgundy velvet drapes hung generously over lace at each window. Large, luscious ferns and plants gave a sense of well-being to the dining room and parlours. Chairs, upholstered in rich velvets, and fine wood tables, "the kind with the clawed feet and balls" furnished the rooms. And there was a fancy, built in china cupboard in the dining room where Mrs. Coppins displayed fine china.

Just out of the dining room, onto the verandah, was a small, glassed in porch.

While on a recent trip to Plymouth, Mass. we visited a museum where a lot of "Pilgrim artifacts" are displayed. And on a passenger list from the Mayflower, there is a "Francis Coppins" listed. Could it have been an ancestor?

At this point, it gets a little sketchy about ownership. Supposedly, the people who started the Stuart's Drug Store bought the house. Their names were Mel and Gladys Stuart. She apparently ran a tea room out of the dining room here. Their daughter, Betty, married a pharmacist named Ray Hadden. He took over the drugstore when Betty's father retired. And then, Ray and Betty retired as well and moved to the U.S.

Some Ridgeway residents remember the Stuarts living here and they also remember the house being lived in by others, who only resided here for a year or two, here and there.

W.K. Brown

Mr. Brown bought the house in the late 1930's. He was a lawyer here in town and eventually he had a partner, Tom Jones, who also happened to live across the street. His widow lives there still. Today the firm is known as Jones and Jamieson.

Mr. and Mrs. Brown raised their three sons in this house and lived here for 30 years. Mrs. Jones recalls how her children had fun running up the front stairway, down the hallway, and down the back stairs.

A retired judge in Welland, mentioned to my family, how Mr. Brown referred to his house, as the "mansion." He was quite proud of the fact that he lived in such a grand home.

He is the one responsible for many of the house's changes. Changes that would take away some the home's most Victorian features. Maybe in an attempt to update the look of the house, he took down the tower, painted the brick, pulled off the many fancy brackets. During the 1940's and 1950's, people didn't like the Victorian architecture. Or it could be that some of the wood trim work was deteriorating. He had a bathroom and a spare bedroom constructed inside the summer kitchen. The upper family bedrooms were converted into an apartment to bring in an extra income to keep up the house.

Flora and John Baer

They owned the house at 356 Ridge, next door to the church. A little history on that house includes the following. It was also built by Lt. Col. Morin in the early 1890's, after he moved to Welland. Interestingly, the floor plan of the house is the same as the house at 348, with a few variations. The house's principal rooms are on a smaller scale and a little more built out on the second floor. The house was sold to Hugh Sherk in 1895, upon completion. After that there were a few different owners and a Dr. Stackhouse owned it in the 1940's and maybe the 50's. It was bought by a Kendrick family to be used as a convalescent home in the 1960's. After a few years they sold it to the Baer's, who presently own it. They purchased the house at 348, this house, when the Browns decided to retire to Port Colborne. Mr. Brown had been a real irritant as far as the property was concerned. There were problems with the septic tank and he was sure the problem came from the nursing home next door. They paid 40,000 dollars in 1968 for the property.

Then in 1985, they decided to sell.

Robert and Irma Kentie

Jacob and Catharina Kentie

Jack(Jacob) and Teena(Catharina) were tenants in the house since the Baer's purchase in 1968. They lived in the lower half with their two sons, Robert and Peter. Other tenants lived in the two upper apartments. Jack was employed by the Fort Erie Dairy and did the maintenance work on the nursing home and the house itself. Teena was employed as a cook for the nursing home as well till they finished operating the nursing home around 1985.

Jack and Bob started their own dairy distributorship in 1978 for Beatrice Dairy Products. They put a few pieces of office furniture in the front hallway of the house for the office and parked their trucks in the back of the driveway..

When the Baer's decided to sell the property in 1985 it made business sense to buy. The one condition in the sale was the property was to be severed about 40 feet where the inground pool had been built. The pool had been put in when the Baer's owned both properties. And for various reasons we didn't want the pool. We felt the property would be large enough without it.

Jack and Teena lived upstairs then and Bob and Irma lived with their 2 daughters and son in the lower half and part of the upper half. At first, we didn't think too much of trying to keep the maintenance and renovations to period. But as we started to appreciate the style and quality of workmanship we tried to keep to period. At least Bob and I did.

Jack and Teena moved out in January 1996 to a senior's apartment building. Bob and I had to start maintaining the house ourselves and it became a major task. Bob wasn't handy and didn't have time. He's also a part-time associate pastor at Sherkston Brethren in Christ Church. I work part-time at a local Christian private high school, Niagara Christian Collegiate in the kitchen. And I chair a Kitchen Committee at our church. Our daughters are teenagers and our pre-teen son keep us busy as well. So the grand old lady went up for sale.

On November 7, 1997 William and Suzanne McCreary gained possession.

A Study of the Historical Architecture

A historical architect, who once taught courses on the subject at the University of Mississippi, toured the house and was absolutely delighted to find such a wonderful example of Victorian architecture here in the Niagara Peninsula. To find so much of the house still almost as it was the day it was built was remarkable to her. To hear such praise was a heart warmer.

We'll begin with a walking tour, starting at the front of the house outside.

The verandah is its most obvious Victorian feature which is still somewhat intact. A few pieces of detail woodwork are now gone as you compare the house presently to the photo which was taken in the early 1900's. Another photo I once had of the house, showed large, bamboo shades on the west and south side of the porch. Also, a hammock was slightly visible and today the hooks are still there. The porch gets very hot in the mid-afternoon so I can see the reason for the blinds. A smaller porch is situated on the verandah that encompasses the dining room entrance. It was a couple feet shorter than it is now and had multi-paned windows all around. The dining room door still features an old-fashioned door bell in the centre of the door.

The stairs going up the verandah had a paneled, curving handrail on each side. They were almost boxy looking with fancy trimwork and mouldings. You can still see the set marks in the concrete.

There is the big bush by the side of the driveway, near the verandah steps. This is a honeysuckle and was present already in a photo taken at the turn of the century. In June, it has the most beautiful, fragrant pink blooms.

Other bushes once present but now gone, were the mock orange and lilacs. There are some still to be found on the edge of the driveway but there had been some around the verandah. The house was never really landscaped all that much. There apparently was some sort of a flower garden in the back left corner of the property, as it is today.

At this point, I would like to mention that the house had many artists setting up an easel, across the street. There are supposedly quite a few paintings around, featuring this house. Some wealthy American family in Buffalo, who have a summer home along the lake here, has one hanging in their Buffalo home. I was told by the dear old lady, who lived in the white house next door, that the artists used to line up with their easels on a Sunday afternoon, to paint this house.

The house also had the big, fancy brackets under the eaves and a sawtooth design moulding under them. You can still see the places where they were if you look carefully. Again, probably in his attempt to update the house Mr. Brown had them removed. There is still one original bracket in the garage. Quite fancy piece of work and very much like the ones you see adorning the eaves at the Historical Museum here in town. The museum was once the Bertie Town Hall and built in 1874. Another clue maybe to date our house by.

As our eyes shift upward to the roof, there lies another clue to the date of the house. The mansard roof was typically built in the 1860's and 1870's. They were generally shingled like this one was originally in a cedar shake type of wood shingle. Empire-style it is now called. And as in the Victorian era, it was painted in horizontal strips on a few colours. The Victorians liked their

homes and furnishings elaborate and colourful. They especially enjoyed the richness of the jewel tone colours. I think the siding now on the mansard roof was probably put on in the late 1950's or early 1960's.

It is a shame about the painted brick work. The patterns of the buff coloured brick along the corners of the house and over the windows and doorways added interest and character. It isn't good for brick to be painted because if moisture finds its way in, it could damage the inside walls eventually. There is a chemical wash that could be effective in removing the paint. But it seems that it's difficult to get a company to come here from Toronto. Of course, when I last looked into it, it was several years ago and maybe today it is easier. Sandblasting is very damaging to the surface of the brick and has never been considered for that reason.

The side porch, a little further up the driveway, was once an open porch trimmed in gingerbread woodwork. It was about half the size it is today. There was also an entrance to the summer kitchen, or basement, which was visible on the old wood siding as an outline.

The upper windows on the wooden frame section of the house were all shuttered.

Now, as you enter the house from the front doors, you will find yourself standing in the front hallway. The stairway is a remarkable work of fine craftsmanship. The banister gracefully curves around and up. It is hand crafted of imported oak and mahogany. The type of woods used were popular for use particularly in churches and halls at the time. Some say the banister alone adds 30-40,000 dollars in value to the home. There is an identical staircase built in the Roselawn Center in Port Colborne. Roselawn is also a Victorian building built in the same style as this house. It also has identical fireplaces which leads me to think that Mr. Cutler could've had a hand in the building of it.

Note the amount of trim around these doors to the parlours. Also, the suspended ceiling light. I imagine the light is an original from gas lighting days. It may be missing a shade, I'm not sure.

Turning to your left, you will enter the front parlor. The eleven foot high ceilings lend a formal air to the parlours and dining room. The eight foot windows are beautifully and elaborately trimmed, with moldings on panels beneath. The trim work is in the Eastlake style, which was popular with its lines and geometric shapes. A furniture maker in the late 1860's, by the last name of Eastlake, used at least three parallel lines in his designs, circles and zigzags. Any less than 3 lines means the piece of furniture, or trim work in this case, could've been built in a later time period. This fact leads me to believe the house had to be built around 1875. Anyway, the trim work and doors are made of a fine quality white pine. Originally, they were finished with a honey coloured stain and had a graining technique applied to them. This graining technique was also popular during this particular era. It could give a plain wood, like pine, the rich look of a nicely grained wood such as oak. I guess it would be an inexpensive way of getting the look you want without the cost. The unfortunate part about this is, that with the wear and tear over the years, it must've gotten chipped and worn looking. So then they must've decided to freshen it up with paint. These would be hard to strip down and refinish unless you had a gentle but effective way to do it without gouging the grooves, pine being such a soft wood. The front parlour would've been the room where they would've lain out their deceased for viewing as such was the custom in the early days. A morbid thought to us nowadays. This room did have bookcases from floor to almost the ceiling. When we had the wallpaper stripped down you could see the outlines of them. Apparently, our Mr. Brown had them taken down and sent down to the local high school. The windows had interior shutters as can be seen in photographs. And curtain hung over

them. The flooring originally was a burgundy wool carpet with a leaf design in a lighter shade. It was a wall to wall and also covered the middle parlour. Note the generous eleven inch baseboards.

As we enter through the massive pocket doors first thing we'll notice is the fireplace flanked by a door on one side and a built-in bookcase on the other. This fireplace is the original as there are several large homes in Ridgeway built at the same time, and some later, that have the very same brick work and mantle. In the early days, this house was heated with a coal furnace so the fireplace was a coal burning one originally. Then with the gas lighting it was converted to a gas fireplace. And when that went out of date, it became a wood burning kind. I haven't been able to figure out if the bookcase is what it was in the beginning. On the other side of this wall, it is a clothes closet with the original clothes pegs. And as the house next door has the very same floor plan, and it was a built-in bookcase next to the fireplace in that house, I must conclude it was probably the same here.

The cupboard below the extended part of the mantle was probably added in the later years, most likely in the 1950's or 1960's judging by the style of the door. There is baseboard trim, as in the rest of the room, when you look below the lower shelf in the cupboard. Note the double windows and their elaborate trim work again. The ceiling light fixture is original to the house and has been refinished and rewired. An identical one lies in a box in the garage awaiting restoration, and to be hung once again in the front parlour. The ceiling is obviously not the original and was done several years ago before I was interested in trying to keep and renovations to period. When the old ceiling was taken down there were remnants of what was the original. The original must have come down in 1910. It's about that time that electricity was brought into the house. There was newspaper from that date found in the rafters. It was paper that had a sky blue colour and some gold and ivory design. A stripe kind of border, I recall vaguely. In the Victorian times, they often had murals and fanciful designs on their ceilings. At this point we'll turn towards the dining area.

First of all, I don't think the hardwood floor is original to the house. I think it could've been a wall to wall wool carpet as well. I think the hardwood was added sometime during the early part of this century. The beautiful bay window was without the window seat as you can see the fine, molded panels below the windows when you look into the cupboard. Note the gentle, curves in the wall on each side of the windows. Once upon a time, there was a built in sideboard right above the heating duct. You can see the seams in the eleven inch high baseboard on each side of the grill. Again, who knows the reason for this change. One long-time Ridgeway resident told me that one of the previous owners had a tea room in the dining room. The ceiling light fixture is from the Art Deco era (1910-1925). Again, probably in 1910, when the electricity was installed this change was made. If you look closely at the ceiling you can see where the seams are in the plaster work from replacing the gas pipes with wire. For a Victorian dining room there must've been something a little more gracious and elegant earlier. And I imagine the ceiling work would've also reflected that period of time more. How about ceiling moldings, cornices maybe? With all the plentiful trim around the floors, doors and windows I have to wonder if maybe it was just as plentiful around the ceilings at one time. At this point note the two doors side by side. They feature the "cross and bible" panel work as all the doors do in this house. Another comment about the doors at this point, it that they all have porcelain door knobs and are set rather plainly in the door. They remind me of the Empire Loyalists homes in Niagara on the Lake. The builder wasn't one on given to a lot of fancy details and expense for door hardware. But back to the

doors in the dining room. One is a swinging door that goes into the kitchen and the other at one time was the entrance to the butler's pantry. The "brick" arches over the doorways were Jack Kentie's way of updating the kitchen in the 1970's.

The doorway is closed off now in the pantry to make it more practical in its use as a laundry room. Butler's pantries are a rarity nowadays and again add value to the century home. They were built off the kitchen and dining room as to make it easier to set, serve and clear the table at meal times. This particular pantry also had a hand pump and porcelain sink in its earlier days.

Now we arrive in the kitchen. The main house kitchen in this case. This house also had a summer kitchen where the bathroom, spare room and hall closet are built in today. You can tell by the many doors and windows in this main kitchen that they must've used free standing cupboards and tables for storage and work areas. I think there were a few tall upper cupboards built on the north and east walls. I remember there being old cupboard doors laying in the garage at one point. On the east wall, by the door to the porch, I remember there being an upper cupboard that had a pair of bi-fold doors. All the cupboard doors were of the same style as the ones in the butler's pantry.

The summer kitchen was used only in the summer to keep the heat out of the main house. Today if you go out of the basement through a hallway that leads to the garage, you can see the old gas pipes by the window for the lighting. Also, the height of the window suggests that at one time there was a floor that ran across the hall at the same level as the spare room does today. I think that the Brown's sought to make the summer kitchen amore practical space and decided to turn that space into a downstairs bathroom and spare room. There used to be a window on the east wall.

Off the main kitchen there are the stairs to go up to the servant's quarters as well as to the family's main sleeping area. Also, a room is off by itself and possibly was used as a morning room in its earlier days. The room has an east and a west window which makes it a very bright room in the morning and in the evening. In the Victorian era, these rooms were for breakfasting and or for doing writing, needlework, reading, or anything else that required light. It's interesting that this room has fancy trim beneath the sills of the windows. It also has a closet that has several cast clothes pegs. Maybe that's where their outerwear was kept. Or maybe the room had a different function altogether.

We shall now go upstairs via the servant's stairway. The stairs were originally painted in an "ox blood" red milk paint, as well as all the wood flooring in the servant's quarter's quarters. The bathroom at the top of these stairs was installed about 25 years ago when Mrs. Baer converted the servant's area into a bachelor apartment. The pedestal sink was once in the bathroom in the family sleeping quarters. The doorway to the bathroom was placed there about 10 years ago. The doorway used to be from inside the small bedroom. Turning right, down the hall is the small bedroom. Without the wall separating the bathroom and the bedroom, this would've made for a longer room. And fairly bright with the two windows. When the room was renovated it was interesting to find that that the wall on the east side has a brick wall inside of it. It could be possible that there once was a chimney, or fireplace, in the summer kitchen, which would've been directly below the closet and room next to the small bedroom. Or maybe it could've been just a firewall for protection from the heat below.

Now we take a step down and to what was probably a bedroom and sitting area. The closet in the hall may, or may not, have been there where it is today. Although, the doorway of the

closet looks original. The bedroom is quite large and fairly bright so it could be that this was for the main help in the house. The closet must've been the closet for the bedroom. Often, in Victorian times, they would build a window in the closet for light. The closet was galley kitchen when it was a bachelor apartment. And the window right next to the closet doorway was there originally but was made into a doorway with an exterior staircase for a private entrance to the bachelor apartment. A gas space heater was used for heat at that time. In the early days, the heat from the rest of the house would've been the only heat warming this end of the house. There are wooden squares in the wood floor that could've originally been where an opening in the floor, covered with an iron grill, could've carried heat up.

Going up the steps to the main house bedrooms one has to marvel at the design of these stately home. It's these little, interesting nooks and crannies that give these homes their charm. Note the wood trim along the edges of the walls and ceiling in this servant area hallway. The little window along the upper stairs. Think about all the hands that once held onto that curvy, little banister. Note the bigger doorway as we enter the family's sleeping area. Everything for the servant area was smaller and plainer in design. To the right is the bathroom. It once had the pedestal sink where the vanity stands today. The toilet is where it has always been. The floor is raised, where the tub is, to accommodate the gas piping for the gas stove in the kitchen. There once was a clawed foot bathtub placed across the front of the window. Behind the cupboards there is still the old baseboard intact. The bathroom has a pretty, deep silled window just like the rest of the windows in this area of the house. The fireplace chimney adds interest to the room.

Across from the bathroom is a door frame that once belonged to a hallway closet. If you walk into that room, you can see the outline of that closet in the ceiling. The closet had a pretty stained glass window for light. It seems odd how that closet would've projected into the bedroom in those days. This closet would've stored linens, quilts, blankets, towels and maybe out of season clothing. The bedroom itself had a closet built in on the left side of the light fixture on the wall. Victorians like to make good use of the space behind staircases. This closet was walled over when this part of the house was made into an apartment and this room became a living room. This room has two of those charming windows and interesting curves in the walls because of the mansard roof. The floor beneath the carpet is a nice oak floor. Unfortunately, former tenants of Mrs. Baer had a cat that left its mark on the floor in a few areas. But the carpet was put down more for sound proofing the room.

The hallway is very generous in its proportions. The flooring is a nice oak wood and did sustain some damage towards the front of the house. As already mentioned previously, the blasting through the rock for the sewers to be installed, caused some shift in the house. Now, if you take a look beside the light fixture in the hallway, you will notice a slight unevenness in the wall. The baseboard also changes at this point. This is where the staircase from below came into the upper hallway. This wall was built so a second bedroom could be incorporated for the apartment. They, the Baers, took out part of the banister and the railing around the stairway opening. They closed over the opening with plywood and put linoleum over it and they had a second bedroom. Again, you may wonder why. The daughter of Mrs. Baer, Donna, has had little interest in preserving historical architecture and gave little thought to it renovating. If you were to go into the house she owns next door, which once was almost as elaborate as this one where woodwork trim is concerned, you'd want to cry at its "bastardization." This term "bastardization" is a term used in historical architectural circles to describe the effects of stripping away historical architectural details from older buildings. Anyway, if the banister and stairway

were intact you would find that the hallway would be much brighter with the two windows that are in the landing.

Let us take a look at what is presently a kitchen. A door to a porch and an exterior stairway was built to give a tenant private entrance. There may have been a window there in its place originally but again it's kind of hard to tell. Going by the fact that the other two bedrooms have two windows this may have been the same. I think there must've been a closet built in here as well at one time. The kitchen has been in this room since the 1960's. The present cupboards and counter top were built by Jack Kentie when he lived there. He was a "Jack of all trades but master of none!"

And of course, we come to the last bedroom, the front bedroom. This room is very much all intact. It is a very bright bedroom with its two west windows and a third to the North. It has a very generous closet with Victorian clothes pegs and all.

Looking at the landing area across the hall, you will notice the stairway to the tower. The tower was removed probably in the 1950's. After 100 years, it would've had seen better days. The roof is presently a tar and gravel roof. The tower had a window on each side of the peak. Maybe someday someone will see fit to restore the tower, maybe even the whole house!

Sometimes I think about all the people who might have walked through these rooms. If only the walls could talk. I know that this house holds many wonderful memories for our family, the whole Kentie clan. We have had the wonderful privilege to live in such a well built, generously proportioned, history laden house. We have had such large gatherings of people in the parlours, many have feasted in the dining room. Many have entered our house with "oohs" and "aahs" much like I did when I was first welcomed into this family. My deepest regret is that we cannot take care of the grand, old lady in the style she deserves.

Yes, we've done some updates. The entire servant area was gutted, insulated with Fiberglas insulation, drywalled anew and floors and ceilings refinished. A lot of rewiring has been done upstairs and downstairs throughout. Plumbing has been all done over in plastic and copper lines. Central vacuum was installed to make cleaning such a large home a lot easier.

Speaking of the basement area, brings to mind the coal bin that is still there in the area of the furnace. This house was heated originally with coal and the stove and bin are still there today. The coal furnace was done away with only about 30 years ago. A piece of it still lies on the basement floor. Jack remembers dismantling it and carrying the big, heavy pieces out of the basement. Also, note the bedrock on which this house was built. That's probably why this house hasn't done much in the way of shifting. I found wallpapering, the walls are still very plumb.

The Garage

I would like to mention at this point, the garage. It was actually an office at one time. It was located beside the little, white garage next door. The Collards, who built the house next door in 1912, remember placing theirs right next to it. Since Lt. Col. Morin was a book keeper and business manager for Eber Cutler, it would make good sense to have an office near the home in those days. The oak wood work is absolutely splendid on the ceiling and walls. The cement foundation on which it sat is still partially visible on the edge of the driveway right next to the white garage.

As I've looked at the old photographs of the house, I can see there never was much in the way of landscaping done around the house. There are the typical, Victorian flowering shrubs,

such as mock orange blossoms, spirea and lilac planted along the driveway. Around the verandah there once were some lilac bushes and "snowball" bushes. Little, blue, forget-me-nots grow wild here and there. Bluebells and lily of the valley bring a little colour in June below the bay window. In July and August, a clump of orange tiger lilies wave in the summer breeze there. Fragrant white and fuschia peonies blossom in June along with the gentle, pink blooms of the honey suckle bush in the front of the house.

There are still many things to discover about this house. There are things that I was told but have forgotten. There are always rumours that may carry a ring of truth. I've done most of this research at the Fort Erie Centennial Library where they have a historical archives room. Of particular note, is the historical account of the Ridgeway Memorial United Church by R.M. Disher, a longtime Ridgeway resident who now lives in New Brunswick. There is also a biographical sketch of Col. Lt. Morin in the Welland County history book. And of course, those very valuable, armchair historians who are a part of the history of the village of Ridgeway themselves. I truly hope that if any future owner happen upon further information that they will see fit to include it in this paper. I will be giving the Ridgeway Historical Museum a copy of this research for their archives.

Irma Kentie 1996