

THE COTTAGE IN THE GARRISON ROAD - 1893 - 1900

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The cottage on the Garrison Road was built in the spring of 1893. The property is on the southerly side of the road about two miles from the Village of Fort Erie, about five acres of almost level farm land. The Garrison Road, then a dirt road, was dusty in the summer and hub deep in mud in the spring.

The property was the southeast corner of a one hundred acre farm belonging to Wally Schisler whose house and barns were several hundred feet to the west on the same side of the road, at the corner of a cross road named the Schisler Road. The property was opposite the easterly end of the Cruickshank farm, Mr. Cruickshank, my mother's friend where we had previously spent summers. The land was open except for several large old apple trees, the remnant of an orchard in about the middle of the tract. The house was built just back of these trees, about one hundred fifty feet back from the road. This gave a very large degree of seclusion. The barn was built still further back on the property. There was an old farm rail fence and a growth of trees along the easterly boundry. Father had a wire fence built along the other

three sides. A driveway was built some seventy-five feet in from the westerly boundary; it entered the property through a gate in the fence.

My mother was the architect for the house; I remember her studying the design of the house and supervising its construction. The house was one story and an attic in height.

There was a small vegetable cellar under the southwest corner of the house. Otherwise the building was supported on stone piers; the space under the house was unexcavated. The building was of frame construction, the exterior wall material was shingles while the exterior walls were covered with sheating and building paper. The shingles were stained red.

There was a large fireplace in the living room but no heating system in the house. This was a summer residence, but the building so constructed that it could be converted for all year use. There was no plumbing in the house; water supply was a well and cisterns. There was a privy near the barn.

Father planted trees along the westerly boundary and along the banks of a small creek which flowed through the Cruickshank property, crossed the Garrison Road and ran easterly through our land a short distance in from the road. Back of the house, to the east of the drive to the barn, father planted a vineyard and to the west of the drive a vegetable garden. A flower garden for mother was laid out at the east side of the house.

About a half acre of land around the house was in lawn. The land, not otherwise used, was sown to timothy and a crop of hay harvested each year. The farmer next door, Wally Schisler, from whom father had bought the property, cut the hay. Weather permitting, the hay was cut on the fourth of July. This being an American holiday, father was at home. Some years there was a second cutting in September. The hay which we didn't need for our own horse, Wally Schisler bought or sold as father's agent.

Built for us kids was a playhouse, west of the drive in front of the vegetable garden. The building was a single room about 8 x 10 feet in dimension with a narrow veranda. The outside was vertical boarding and battens. It was stained the same red as the main house. The door opened from the veranda. In this wall, the wall opposite and one end wall were windows. The south wall toward the vegetable garden was blank. On center out from this wall, with stove pipe through the roof, stood the small three legged cast iron, wood burning stove, which had been in the original log cabin on the Seib farm in the Town of Tonawanda which father remembered as a boy.

Cozy Corner was another favorite play area. Cozy Corner was a v shaped recess in the old rail fence along the east boundary, under a big tree. A path was kept cut through the hay field from the house lawn area to Cozy Corner.

Father must have carried out the development of the property completely shortly after the house was built. My recollection is of a finished and mature property.

A unique character, Dutch Frank, worked for father much of the time. Dutch Frank was of very indefinite age, neither young nor old. He had a wooden right leg. Dutch Frank lived alone in a shack on the next crossroad to the west, the Schisler Road. His "house" was on the west side of the road a few hundred feet south of the Garrison Road. He had a garden for vegetables and a few flowers. Very honest and reliable, he worked hard all week. On Saturday he would walk the two miles to Fort Erie for his next week's provisions and a few drinks. When the neighbors saw him coming up the road on Sunday morning with a hemp sack containing his provisions over his shoulder, they knew that the Fort Erie Village Police had been very willing to let him sleep it off Saturday night in the Village Jail.

During the summer months at the cottage, each business day morning, father and mother drove to the ferry landing in Fort Erie. Mother drove back there to get father at the end of the day. On the American side father used the New York Central commuter trains stopping at Ferry Street and the Terrace Station in Downtown Buffalo or he could use the Niagara Street trolley cars. This was travel of about eight miles a day, good exercise for the horse.

We had the cottage on the Garrison Road only seven years. I was ten years old when it was built in 1893 and seventeen in 1900 when it was sold.

Father and mother decided that they would no longer have a winter and summer residence, that they would live year round out of the city. It was at this time that the property at 96 Niagara Boulevard in Fort Erie was purchased.