

Tour of Lonsdale District Most Enjoyable of Series

The last architectural tour for the season drew a crowd of forty-two on Sunday. After assembling at Blessington to see Farrell's blacksmith shop, filled with the atmosphere of other days, the motor cavalcade proceeded along the Fourth of Tyendinaga to see two deserted early houses.

First was the Tripp house, set far back on the north side of the road under a magnificent elm tree, a little gem of classic revival carpentry. The heavy frieze below the eaves suggests the Greek Revival, but the fact that the doorway is centred between the two windows suggests something a trifle earlier; we think this house may date to about 1840. The front door leads right into the square parlor, and there are tiny bedrooms behind and a kitchen wing to the right. A stove in the centre of the parlor will have heated the place adequately. There were never any stairs to the upper storey, it seems: just a ladder from the kitchen end.

Further east, the Capt. Davies house was much admired for its spacious rooms and attractive situation. It is said to have been built just after the War of 1812 and is a very large stone Regency Cottage in style, with its hipped roof and central doorway with arch fanlight and round columns each side — much like the Ponton house in effect. Unusually, this house has three large windows each side of the doorway. The brackets under the eaves are in threes too.

O VERANDAHS

We noticed no signs of veranda's on the Davies house, except one more recent on the eastern end. The floor plan is altogether baffling — likely cut up differently at different times. There are two great stone chimneys, and signs of at least one fireplace. The woodwork in the broad front hall, deeply furrowed, with turned bulls-eyes in the top corners, suggests the late 1830's, and this may be no coincidence, for we are told the house changed hands in 1837. The cellar was once a fine one, nicely built and carefully white-washed, and the floor joists resting on a beam nearly two feet square, were not just tree-trunks but nicely sawn two-by-tens in the modern manner.

Capt. Davies is said to have annoyed his neighbors by dam-

carefully preserved, though one finds the use of aluminum siding windows, and paint a little too slick, out of harmony with the house's age.

The United Church, built for the Wesleyan Methodists in 1868, was opened for the group. It has an almost timeless and pleasantly plain interior. It keeps its original wood stoves (patented 1858) and pulpit and pews; yes, and doorkey. It is a world apart, the most modern distraction being a memorial plaque from the First World War. The style of the building is Italian. Except for the vestibule, the facade of the church is delightfully proportioned.

ITALIAN TASTE

One marvels at how hard the Italian taste hit this area in the 1860's. Many of the prettiest houses along the Third show traces of it.

J. F. English's house, at which the group were entertained with tea and coffee, was built about 1850, of stone, the basic Ontario Farmhouse type that was derived from the Regency Cottage: centre entrance, single window to left and right, ordinary pitched roof (not the Regency hipped, which doesn't leave much room upstairs for bedrooms and is tricky to ventilate) and a little Gothic gable over the front door. Summer kitchen and woodshed grow in a "tail" out the back, and a veranda is standard equipment in front.

The most notable thing about the buildings visited on this tour was the perfect adaptation of building and site in every case. The church on its hill, the mill on its island, the Lazier-Cappell house with its important rooms above and others down on the lower level, the Davies house spread on a rise overlooking a little stream, the Tripp house with its great elm planted to cast a cooling shadow from the south and west, the English house with its slightly rising lawn cooled by the breezes from under an avenue of shade trees to the west. How ludicrous, by comparison, seem our various ranch-style or split-level suburban houses, handsome, no doubt, but fitter to stand alone on some open prairie than jostling eaves with more of the same.

The previous tour — of Victoria Avenue and Charles St.

of the century maybe) but they did help to give the interesting play of light and shade that delights the eye.

TREES COMING DOWN

The trees that were planted a century ago on Victoria Avenue are fast coming down. Nothing else can lend unity and scale to such a miscellaneous street. Nothing else can so efficiently 'air-condition' a neighborhood, particularly in this age of pavements and hot motor-cars.

The new apartment block on George St. is handsome in its way, with an interesting arrangement of balconies; but it can never have the appeal of the 'George Street Cottage', destroyed last summer, which it replaces. Have our property owners and builders not got the imagination to recognize buildings that have character, to restore and use them, and to destroy only what is inferior? Victoria Avenue is littered with nondescript buildings that could well have been swept away, and Belleville would not have been impoverished.

On Charles St., which was shown in 'Picturesque Canada' as the fashionable street of the early 1880's, the group lamented the loss of the fantastic 'Charles Addams' Holton house, burned four years ago, of which a photo is shown in the Museum's present exhibit. A boxy house of vaguely 'Georgian' style now exists on the site, but one is interested to see a renescent interest in Victoriana revealed in the use of gas lights on the front lawn.

The two double houses just south of this are said to have

ming up his little stream and running a saw mill briefly, causing some flooding in the surrounding fields. The oddest feature of the house is the woodshed, coned within the simple rectangle of the house, in the north - west corner.

In Lonsdale the group was privileged to go through the old grist mill, still retaining its machinery all beautifully put together of wood and iron. This mill was built for the brothers Lazier in 1830. James McCullough was the first miller, 1830-65. With this mill and a woollen mill and the lumber industry, five hundred men were employed in Lonsdale at one time, and there were once three churches, a school, two hotels, a blacksmith shop, a saddle and harness store, a general store, a post office, a doctor, and a dentist and an undertaker.

THINGS OF BEAUTY

Inside the mill, the wooden supporting columns, three on the ground floor and three on the second floor, are things of beauty. The mill builder, doubtless, had a long English tradition behind him (was he a Ford, from Lancashire?) and has chamfered each post lovingly and stopped each chamfer top and bottom with a vigorously-cut curve in a style at least two centuries old at the time.

Lonsdale's stone architecture is very beautiful, the stone being of an attractive brownish color and of a better texture than Belleville's. The community itself is picturesquely situated, a mecca for artists.

The most interesting house is on the brink of the hill north of the mill. It was built by a Lazier, and is a Regency Cottage, with stone lower part and clapboards above and a belvedere on top. The belvedere contains bedrooms lighted by high strip windows all around. It is good to see such a house

mainly—has not been reported till now. So much interest has been generated by this series of architectural walking tours that people actually have come out to invite the party in as it passed; no less than three householders did so on this one tour.

NOT GOOD CONDITION

The tour proceeded along Victoria from Church St. as far as Lingham to see the great old house there, in disgraceful condition but still showing signs of Italianate grandeur. One wonders whether Joel Jellyman had a hand in designing it: his touch was heavy, and his sense of proportion not good, but he built in the style rich men wanted around 1860-75.

The Italianate house with a belvedere at Albert St. has recently been fixed up and the graceful piazza painted. There is a hairdresser in one part of the house, but (apart from a parking lot) the house has been unpathetically treated and is an ornament to the neighborhood.

A Gothic Revival house at the corner of Charles is lovingly kept up, dark and shady among its trees. An early photograph shows a verandah with intricate treillage (there is still somewhat similar work at the back, invisible from the street). The verandah is hardly necessary now for shade, but would help the proportions of the house. The arched window over the front door is unusually graceful, in the Gothic taste. The lintel of the door may be Greek in style. This house is to be compared with the one above the Corby Library. Both may be of about 1850. The woodwork in the front hall resembles that in the Robertson house, but with rosettes instead of lions' heads.

MODEL CORNER STORE

The corner store across the way on Charles is a model of its kind. It is a dignified square brick house of maybe the 1850's, with later additions. The porches are very functional, for displaying fruit or sheltering customers, and the whole effect is well - proportioned, inviting, friendly, and on the whole an asset to the neighborhood. It is to be contrasted with some too - slickly modernized buildings nearby. Some 'gingerbread' brackets were unfortunately removed recently from the porches of this store. They were not old (put on around the turn

been built for MacKenzie Bowell's two daughters. They were single houses then (sometime in the 60's?) but were divided up and the big front windows altered, evidently in the 1890's.

NOT GOOD TRIMMINGS

Someone should make a study of Victorian ironwork as well as gingerbread (use a telephone camera lens), and Bridge Street is a good place to start. These trimmings are often laughably crude and naive in their design. But how sad a Victorian house looks without them. The Victorians were wildly idealistic, like teenagers. They thought they could cook up a perfect architectural style by choosing features from every great period of the past: hence the term 'eclectic' for their architecture. They followed the same procedure in compiling their 'eclectic' school readers, and many of us remember those with affection. It has been left for us, in our cynicism, to rip off the trimmings 'because they are hard to paint,' and leave these houses, ill-proportioned lumps, fit only to be torn down.

On John Street, the tour noted the brick Orange Hall, just north of Bridge, built in the early 1830's, and also the early Masonic Hall, now much altered and painted cream color.

Final stop, for tea, was the Bellevue Apartments, built in 1876, on Patterson Street. The view is fine, and so are the trees, but the Pinnacle Street end, where the whole block of buildings seems poised on the brink of destruction, shows neglect: a cascade of roses or dwarf birch trees (now that there is a smart modern building next door to live up to) could mitigate the effect of bad placing. Inside, the apartments show signs of splendor. They

are now divided into little flats, but originally were tall 'town houses' of the Montreal type, a type seldom seen at all in this province. The front steps were not always so high: the ground has been cut away somewhat, to brighten the basement apartments.

A field for someone to study during the summer (while the architectural walking tours are in abeyance - might be rail fences. The Lonsdale area is peculiarly rich in rail fences: at least four different types were noted on Sunday in a short space, and a knowing observer could no doubt record many more with his camera or pen.