

At the young age of seventeen, Edward Lee through his sincerity and honesty was able to establish himself as a prominent citizen in Marshville. Lee became active in both the political and cultural aspects of Wainfleet, and through his efforts helped in the development Wainfleet.

The Lee homestead is a monument of his social standing, and through this home we may learn why Edward Lee was and still is fondly called, "The Father of Wainfleet."

Historical Biography

Edward Lee

Edward Lee was born in Ireland in the year 1812, and in 1827, at the age of fifteen, emigrated to Canada. In the year 1827, the original Welland Canal was being dug, and young Lee came straight to the canal, in the neighbourhood of the "deep-cut" - between Port Robinson and Allanburg. Lee acquired employment with Duncan McFarlane, a store keeper. Due to Lee's honesty and uprightness of character, he was allowed to collect and keep all the unsettled accounts when the store closed. In the year 1832, Lee became acquainted with John Graybiel; together they established a general store at Marshville under the name Lee and Graybiel. Lee later became the proprietor of the property on both sides of the Feeder Canal, which he continued to hold till the time of his death.

Lee was also very active in politics. He was elected reeve of Wainfleet, and held the position for twenty-five years.

During that time he was five times Warden of the County.

Lee also held the honoured position of Post Master for forty-five years, and for lengthy periods was Clerk of the Division Court and Treasurer of the Township. Along with Lee's many local accomplishments, he was also elected a Conservative representative in the Provincial Legislature.

Lee's obituary which appeared in the April 15, 1887 issue of the "Welland Telegraph", is worth quoting:

The funeral of the late Edward Lee Esquire on last Saturday last was very largely attended. There were representatives present from every part of the County, and the procession when it moved from the deceased's late residence was fully one mile in length, thus showing the high esteem to which the deceased was held, not only in the neighbourhood where he resided, but in every part of the County. The pall bearers were: J. A. Orchard, Esq., D. D'Deverada, Esp., James McGlashan, Esq., Wm. Brown, Esq., Reeve of Wainfleet, A. K. Scholfield, Esq., Port Colborne, and W. J. Atkins, Esq., Dunnville, The body was interred in Morgan's burying ground, at the lake.

The Edward Lee Home

Edward Lee's life was indeed an active one, and he was continuously doing something for the good, or to enhance the happiness of those around him. Lee was remarkable for his candor, truthfulness, and uprightness, and his death was "deeply regretted by a large circle of friends."²

Lee's outstanding position in the Township of Wainfleet, and the surrounding communities is reflected through the monumental home, which he had constructed in 1858, centred in the Village of Wainfleet.

The Lee home is presently occupied by Mr. and Mrs. James Anderson and their family. The building has been well maintained, with some interior renovations being made during the last fifteen years.

The home is 125 years old this year, according to the official registry records, and is an outstanding example of mid-19th Century middle-class architecture. The home, then, served as a monument of merchant class social standing.

The Lee home, and homes like these, indicate that Ontario was indeed a land of opportunities.

Exterior

Architecture

The Lee home is an example of Georgian architecture, a building style used in England and the English American colonies during the 1700's and early 1800's. The style takes its name from the Kings-George I, II, III, IV-who reigned

during this period.³

Georgian architecture is distinguished by symmetry of balance of design, and restrained by bold ornament based on classic forms. (see picture 1) It makes extensive use of brick and stone. Georgian architects often decorated the rooms with large panels, and large, richly ornamented imposing doors. Ornamental cornices appear around the edges of the roofs, with a balanced number of chimneys on each side.⁴ (see picture 2)

Picture 1 - Obvious is the balance of the house. The large central door has an equal number of windows on each side. The home is relatively square accentuating the classic form.

The original property surrounding the home was approximately 150 acres. The current home sits on two acres.

The land outlined in red marks the boundary of the current property.

The home has thirty-one windows, many of them with original glass extending almost from floor to ceiling. Upon close observation, many windows appear to be "Bubbled", showing the advances made in glass production since the time the house was built. The large windows add solar heat, but mainly the windows took advantage of light at a time when artificial light was not available. The height of the windows adds spaciousness and a certain elegance to the house.(see picture 3)

Picture 3 - Notice: 1 - intricate mouldings surrounding the windows
2 - the general size of the windows, in comparison to the height of the room.

Above and around most of the doors in the house are "lights", or glass panels, which served to take further advantage of every possible source of light. (see picture 4)

Picture 4 - Notice: 1 - the windows surrounding the door
2 - the decorative glass used to beautify the door.

The home sits on a solid foundation of undressed stone, which offers strength and stability. When building the home, the contractors laid brick of three thicknesses which adds to the insulation and increases the strength of the home. The brick used for the construction of the home was purchased and made in the area of the Mill Race, situated in the Village of Wainfleet.

Interior

The interior of the Lee estate has thirteen elegant rooms averaging over 11.5 feet in height. The height adds a distinct elegance and spaciousness, but is mainly utilitarian. The height was practical for a time when additional light was needed, where ever possible.

The thirteen rooms do not include the partial basement. In 1858, when the house was constructed, basements were not used for recreation, but chiefly for storage. Noteworthy also is the fact that the basement was dig by hand. It also may be said that as generations pass, North Americans are getting taller, which perhaps represents another factor determining the basement height of just over five feet.
(see picture 5)

The general framework of the home is of Post and Beam construction. (see picture 6) This form of construction offers stability and strength. Such a solid framework no doubt explains the durability of the home. (see picture 7)

Picture 6 - Notice: 1 - the linkage of two beams in a corner.

The current Anderson kitchen was originally a rough summer kitchen and storehouse. It contained a large brick oven, no longer existant.

In the main area of the house, or the ground floor, great pains were obviously taken by the original owners and builders to make the interior woodwork and mouldings decorative and attractive. In 1858, when the house was built. Lee obviously spent a great deal of money, and had his tradesmen go out of their way to make the home the monument it was and still is today. (see pictures 10, 11, 9)

Pictures 9, 10, 11 - Notice: 1 - intricate woodwork on the bannaister, doorframe, and mouldings.

Situated on the top floor of the home is the walk-in-attic, which was, and is still, used mainly for storage.

In the attic there is a staircase leading up to the "Widow's Watch", (see picture 12) or the flat rectangular area at the summit of the roof, enclosed by a railing, which affords a dramatic view of the surrounding countryside.

Legend has it that these watches originated in the Maritime Regions, where sailors' wives would stand and look out to sea, waiting for their husbands who often did not return.

Conclusion

The Lee estate today is in remarkable condition emphasizing the workmanship of era past, and giving us a partial hope for the future. The home is a monument by which society can set its standards. The excellent condition of the house is surprising, both internally and externally. Over the last decade the home has been renovated and restored, with an attempt to be faithful to the original, so that others may take a nostalgic look at an age gone by.