MUNICIPALITY OF PORT HOPE

HERITAGE DESIGNATION

Address: 98 Ontario Street

Known as: Thomas Wickett House (Penstowe)

Architectural Style: Queen Anne Revival

Date Built: Circa 1894

Date Designated: April 15, 1985 to By-Law No. 21/85, SCHEDULE B-2

Lot Description: PT PARK 35



Architectural Description

This is a late nineteenth-century house and displays the complexity of architecture at that time. Although built in the Queen Anne Revival style, it has detailing of the Romanesque style. The roof is irregular and complicated, but is composed basically of several steeply pitched gables and one overhanging gable dormer. The gables themselves are pedimented with some rafters exposed. The pediment has a set of triple windows in a bold wooden surround. Trimming the windows are tooled pilasters and heavy entablature. Decorative shingles complete the pediment. Generally, the cornice is bare and the eaves are trimmed only by fascia board. The stretcher-bond brick house has various types of structural openings from flat on the top storey, to segmental on the projecting south bay, to rounded Romanesque on the front facade. Voussoirs head most windows, but protruding arched gables of brick surround the semi-elliptical openings. Stringer courses join the sills of the house and join the tips of the arches on the main facade. The main door is set in one of the arched openings, but is itself flat.

Another striking feature of the house is a second-storey bell-cast balcony adorned with heavy turned balusters and turned columns. The balcony roof is supported by brackets and exhibits a moulded frieze. The open end of the balcony is partially filled by lattice like woodwork. The spooled columns are turned and have a rounded, bulbous appearance. On the first storey, a shed-roofed porch with the same characteristics can be seen. The house sits on a squared-stone foundation with segmental basement windows.

Historical Abstract

Dennis Riordan purchased Town Plot Lot 35 from Thomas Ward, Registrar of the County of Durham, and the first lawyer in the district of Newcastle in 1824. Riordan, originally from Limerick Ireland, settled in Port Hope in 1819. He was a tax collector and bailiff. In addition to purchasing this lot on Ontario Street, he also owned land on Walton Street on which his son John later erected the Post Office Block (5-17 Walton Street). Town Lot 35 was subdivided into smaller lots and sold during the 1850's.

In 1890, Mary Ellen Wickett, the wife of Thomas Wickett, purchased a lot in Town Lot 35. Thomas Wickett was born in Cornwall, England in 1849. He and his family including his mother Eliza and brother John emigrated to Canada. Thomas and John Wickett established a dry goods store that was situated in several locations on Walton Street.(Tempest Block 62-68 Walton Street, Quinlan Block 78-92 Walton Street). Thomas married Mary Ellen Jenkins in September 1881.

George Martell Miller, a notable Toronto architect designed the house. Miller was born in Port Hope in 1854, and educated at the University of Toronto in architecture. G. M. Miller was in practice on his own by 1886 and designed a number of important buildings in Toronto throughout the 1890's; Parkdale Collegiate Institute, 1888; the Gladstone Hotel, 1888; and he was the supervising architect during the construction of Massey Hall in 1893.

The Wicketts named the house Penstowe after the area they were originally from in Cornwall. The house appeared in an article in the Globe on June 23, 1894 shortly after being built. The lot was treeless and surrounded by an iron

fence identical to the one in front of the Helm House (61 King Street), undoubtedly cast at the Helm iron foundry. The fence has recently been removed. This late 19th century home displays the Romantic Eclecticism known as the Queen Ann Revival Style or Shingle Style prevalent in the period in both the U.S. and Canada. The style is noted for its Romanesque details, its asymmetrical design and the use of multiple gables, bay windows and porches. The gables are clad with shingles, hence the nickname for this period, Shingle Style.

Archival Photo



A view of the property at the turn of the century surrounded by an iron fence with neighbouring stable.

