



Heritage Property – *Fenner House*



20 Menno St.

The McLaughlin House was built by Conrad Fenner, 1867; addition by Fenner of second storey, 1886

Designated Oct. 5, 1981: bylaw 81-165, “The McLaughlin House”

Conrad Fenner, a carpenter and joiner as well as the deputy fire chief for the village, built his own frame house. As his income (and family) increased, he enlarged his 1½-storey home to a full two storeys in 1886.

The Fenner House is a rare example of a wood-frame structure in Waterloo. Frame houses of this age are relatively rare in urban settings; generally, municipal fire regulations encouraged house construction of brick, as did the village of Waterloo from 1867. Interestingly, the original wooden storey-and-a-half that Conrad Fenner built was enlarged by Fenner into a full two-storey building, and his construction material remained the same.

The year following Fenner's enlargement, town council approved a rigorous bylaw prohibiting frame buildings (other than outhouses).

As bylaws 80, 34 and 36 from June 15, 1887 state, “Within [the inner town's boundaries] every dwelling house, store, manufactory or other building hereafter erected, shall be built of stone, brick, cement, concrete or some material other than wood, and roofed with slate, metal, tile, composition or shingles laid on some fire-proof material or in mortar at least



one-fourth of an inch thick, laid upon roofing boards, closely jointed, provided that within the said [boundaries] stables and outbuildings may be erected of wood plastered or rough case on the outside and roofed as above described That within the [boundaries] hereinbefore described ... any repairs to any frame or wooden building which it will be necessary to execute to the extent of one half of the whole value of such building shall be considered a re-erection and reconstruction, subject to the provisions of this bylaw, and that all plans for such repairs shall first be submitted to the fire wardens for their report thereon." It might be suspected that when deputy fire Chief Fenner set about enlarging his house in 1886, he had an inkling of the bylaw that was to be proposed the following year.

In a classic Georgian style with a symmetrical placement of windows on the front façade and a centre hall plan, the building's entrance is graced by a classical triangular pediment, a tympanum and fluted half columns. Fenner also fitted his new roof with a cornice of carefully worked eaves brackets. The foundation is comprised of granite fieldstone. The plank construction of the house is evident only in the attic, where vertical boards, two inches thick by 21 inches wide, are nailed to similarly-sturdy horizontal ones. Siding covers the planks on the exterior, while lath and plaster does the same on the interior.