

Heritage landmark?

Why Ron Dimock would never bulldoze this house



Appearances are deceiving — This Pereau farmhouse is a provincial heritage landmark and the source of several mysteries. (Elliott)

by Wendy Elliott

Ron and Phyllis Dimock of Pereau may own an historically significant building, but when most people see it for the first time they advise them to "doze it down and start over."

The Dimock's little gem of a farmhouse is definitely not a public attraction, but it might just be the only standing Acadian house that predates the expulsion of 1755.

The tiny, square house has never had indoor plumbing and 30 amp wiring was all the electricity ever installed. Right now the sills have partially rotted due to improper banking for the past 20 odd years.

It's little more than a shell right now and owner Dimock is faced with the fact it would be easier to build a new bungalow than restore his family home. Yet with his background in the building trades, he knows the house is totally unique.

No nails

Located on a hillside overlooking the North Mountain, the house was constructed long ago without "hardware" of any kind. The corner posts are pegged together, but there were no nails whatsoever used in building.

The walls were made of (by today's standards) massive vertical planks approximately 20 inches wide and four to five inches thick. A gigantic chimney probably occupied one-eighth of the 25 by 26 foot floorspace.

Taking layers off the inside walls Dimock discovered trees flattened on one side framing the house. Moss was used to cork the original walls, as well as large sheets of birchbark. Smoke blackened the beams a couple of centuries ago.

The mysteries of land ownership and construction may never be solved, but the little house has captured the imagination of many experts in the field. Staff from

Parks Canada, the provincial government and archeologists have all spent time at the site and the house received heritage designation this spring.

French artifact?

One archeologist from St. Mary's University was so intrigued by a fireplace arm Dimock had ploughed up nearby, he drove all the way to the Acadian village in northern New Brunswick to confirm it matched the French style.

The archeologists spent just three days in Pereau this past summer, but they want to come back and dig longer. According to

Dimock, a find of authentic Acadian garbage would go a long way toward dating the house.

Meanwhile the Dimocks have their own home to maintain and an existing mortgage. They say having the wherewithall to restore or even stabilize the family home has to be another of the mysteries connected to the house.

Ron Dimock's dream is to have the house return to what it looked like just after it was constructed with whitewashed plank walls and no amenities. Because of its unique construction style he thinks it would make "a great study tool" for architects and historians.

Oldest in Pereau

Since a visit to Louisbourg in 1987 sparked his interest in the construction style of the house, Dimock has done a lot of sleuthing. He knows the little house is the oldest in Pereau because it has been in his family for four or five generations.

But the origins of the house seem lost in history. He knows there was a structure standing on the property in 1796, but beyond that date are only question marks.

Hopefully next summer when the archeologists return an answer will be uncovered. Meanwhile Ron Dimock clearly enjoys playing Sherlock Homes.



