

FADED FOOTPRINTS

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*from another era*



Senneville, taken from the road near a windmill, 1831

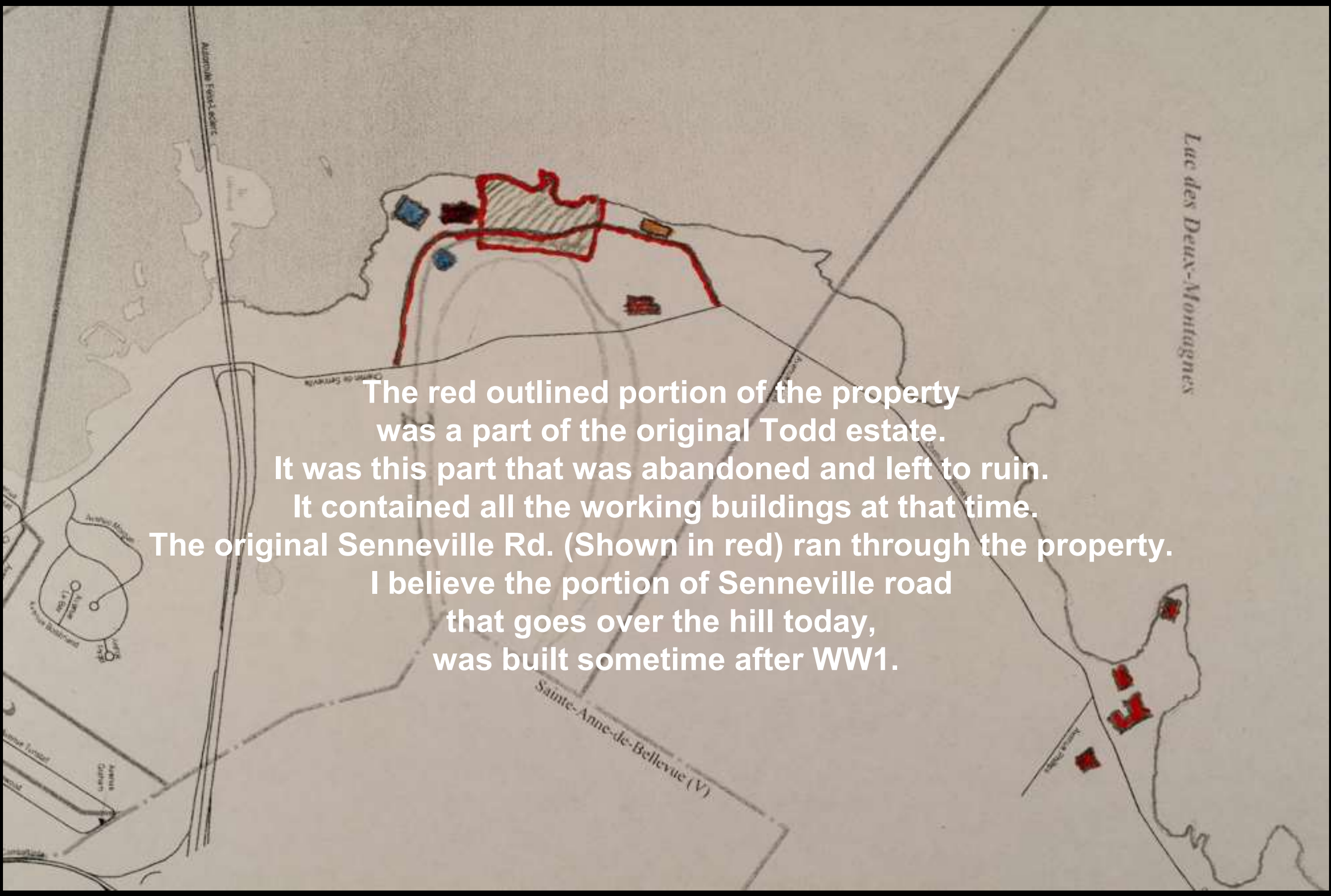
By James Duncan

Montreal Archives



# WARNING

The following subject matter may prove disturbing to some viewers.  
They may question the sanity of the presenter  
and this could trigger anxiety.



The red outlined portion of the property was a part of the original Todd estate. It was this part that was abandoned and left to ruin. It contained all the working buildings at that time. The original Senneville Rd. (Shown in red) ran through the property. I believe the portion of Senneville road that goes over the hill today, was built sometime after WW1.





**This is Donald McTavish, the one with the red tie, and in my opinion, one of the brightest people I have ever known. Donald with his merry band of helpers did it all. He was also from Senneville.**

*Part 1;*  
*The story of the clean up on a portion of the Boisbriant property*

*Part 2;*  
*Walking the dog, at 286 Senneville Road*

*by*  
*Douglas Cameron Ball*



***The only way to access this property was from the lake side, as there was no access road to the place.***

***Rosanna Todd inherited this portion when her father died in the fifties. She never lived here and due to neglect the property simply fell to ruin over time.***

***This was indeed unfortunate as there were a number of buildings designed by Edward Maxwell that could be described as architectural gems. The principal residence was not part of this group. It still remains on the adjacent property. These were only the working buildings. The fact that the majority of these buildings were architecturally designed made them all the more interesting in my opinion.***

***I remember very well the day I slipped ashore from the frozen lake. The vegetation had taken over, and it was hard to get any sense of what was there. It appeared that it was much like a small village of assorted buildings. There was an incredibly long stable, a couple of houses, and other buildings that must have served a specific purpose.***

***The building that I was searching for however, was not found until my third expedition. This was a squash court building that was rumoured to be hidden somewhere on the property.***

***During the first visit I remember thinking that this must have been much like the feeling that Hiram Bingham experienced when he climbed a mountain in Peru and found Machu Picchu in 1911.***



*This is a story of an incredible place,  
from a very different time*



**All these photos were taken after an enormous clean-up of the property. When the work first started you could not see the water for fallen trees and brush. It was like a jungle. You could not see any two buildings at the same time.**





*When we first learned of this property,  
it had already been abandoned for more than thirty years*







I assume the house in the foreground is a Maxwell design while the little white house to the rear, pre-dates Maxwell





We called this little gem by the water the 'Power House', but it was most likely known as the 'Pump House' in its day.











What must have been a truly magnificent stable had sadly suffered massive damage from the rear. The silo still stood however and was in relatively good condition.





**You can just make out the original Senneville Rd that runs between the two houses**





..and at last, the 'Squash Court' building





A small gallery for the spectators

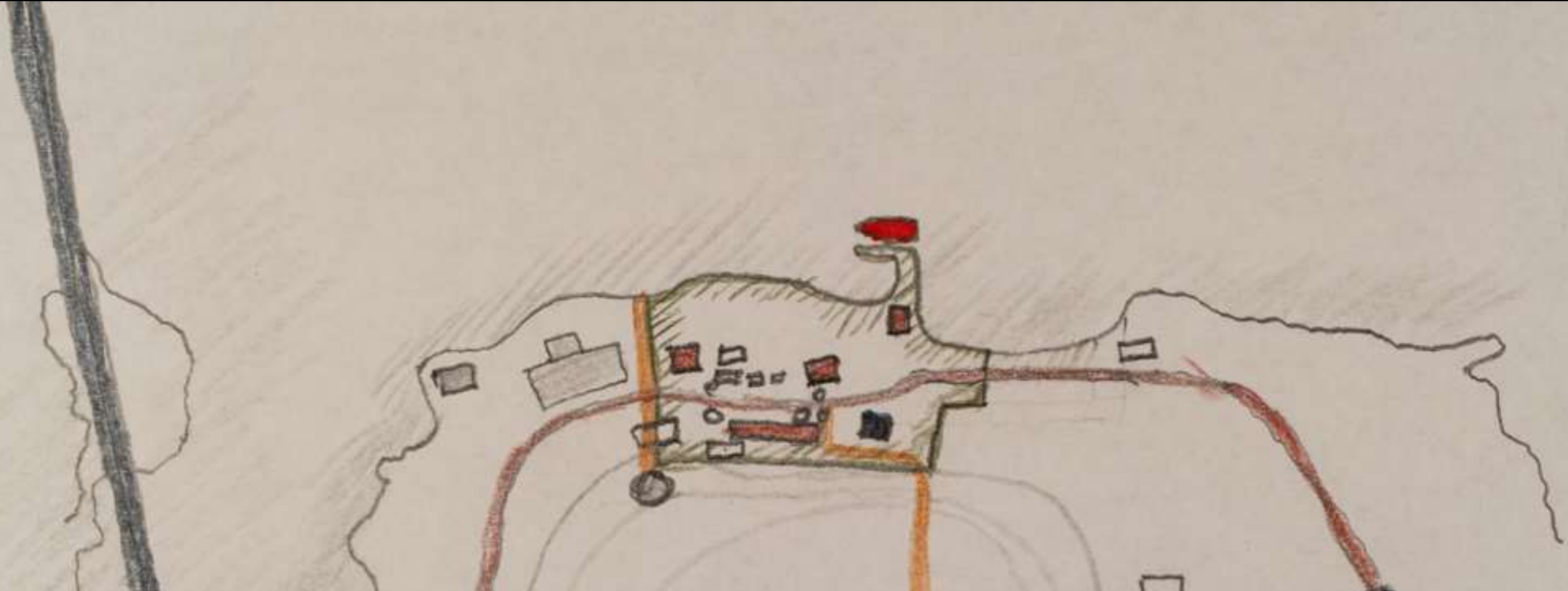


..and where the action took place

We thought that the trunk, filled with old costumes, could have been from Christopher Plummer's time that he spent there, when he was a young aspiring actor. It could have also belonged to Rosanna Todd, who was into theatre as well.







This drawing shows the property outlined in green. The buildings include the Stable, Squash Court, White House, and the Power House down by the water. Also shown is the pier built to allow a steamboat to be tied up. The red road was the original Senneville Road that passed through the property.

The yellow line is the new road into the property. To the left is the original main house, and to the left of that is what remains of Fort Senneville. The very first fortification ( round tower) is shown in green on the bottom left of what was Rosanna Seaborne Todd's property.















**The fire hydrant was supplied from the Pump House down near the water. Fallen trees impacted the roof on two sides.**







**The summer kitchen located in the rear addition.  
This helped to keep the heat from cooking out of the main house.**











**The Power House;**

**I was told that the little upper windows were used to launch clay targets for the skeet shooters waiting with their shotguns, on the waterside pier in front.**



**The 'White House' had been the laundry house. It had been moved to the present location, and was not a Maxwell design.**

**The sills of the side walls were so rotten, you could move them in or out by pushing with your hands. Another big wind could have taken it down.**





**It was a beautiful little house and we were fortunate to have saved it. We received an award for the restoration.**







**An engineer designed a clever frame structure that went inside the walls.  
We then rebuilt the side walls, so they became structural as well.  
We lived in this house for a year while the the work  
on the main house was being completed.**





**This shows the finished 'White House' and some of the large number of birch trees that were planted at the end of the project**





**The stable was 140 ft long, with the towering silo on the left end. The stable interior was lined with glazed white brick, and the ceiling appeared to be redwood.**





**Sadly, the building was beyond repair.  
The rear foundation wall had collapsed inward, which then caused everything else to break up.  
We did save the stone foundation wall and it was incorporated into the new design  
with the new garage and studio space positioned behind it.**





**One could just imagine the horse drawn carriages rolling up with elegant ladies in their long dresses descending carefully from their carriage.**









**Directly opposite from the stable were a group of sheds, which would have been filled with carriages, wagons and other farm equipment. These would have also served at times to break the fierce prevailing winds from the west, offering some relief to those in the courtyard. The sheds were almost all gone.**





**The retaining wall to the rear cracked open and smashed into the foundation wall causing it to rupture as well. Unfortunately, they were not making use of steel reinforced concrete in those days.**





The presence of the hill behind caused water to accumulate by the retaining wall and freezing temperatures would cause serious cracking of the wall to occur. It was too much, and eventually the building was lost.





**Behind the bulldozer, upper right, is a root cellar buried into the hill. These were common in those days. In the upper left there were more structures probably for the storage of wagons or carriages.**





**With a view towards the water one can see the glazed white bricks on what is left of the walls. The foundation wall was rebuilt and offered protection from the wind. The area to the left became a courtyard while the rest became a garage with studio space above.**





**Hiding behind the trees, at centre left, you can see the Squash Court building. We had high hopes of saving it, but as the project progressed, the sills started to go. It was a simple little building made entirely out of cedar, and with no foundation to speak of. The building just sat on the ground and finally the rot set in.**





**The finished studio/garage behind the original foundation wall.  
Located behind, and above, was a tractor house.  
The property required a considerable amount of equipment just to maintain it.**





**You can see the two stone gate posts  
positioned on what would have been the original Senneville Road**









**I considered this to be one of the truly outstanding buildings on the property. It was a classic example of 'Shingle Architecture' from the Maxwell time.**





**It contained a massive engine and pump system to move water to a reservoir on top of the hill, and to supply the fire hydrants on site. The engine must have also been used to charge up batteries, made from large glass jars filled with acid. We found most of the jars had been smashed, and only a couple remained intact.**



**Luckily for us there was enough of this exquisite shingle detailing left to guide us in the restoration. You can see traces of the curved eyebrow over the doorway, and the icicle hanging down on each side. It was such a remarkable design.**









**It is obvious that when this was build, skilled labour was not only cheap, but plentiful. World War 1 changed all that, as many of the workers did not return from the war, and personal and corporate income tax was imposed for the first time in Canada in 1917. A new era had begun.**







**Sydney is holding up a length of wood to help establish a scale which would allow the architect to better understand and then commence work on the building. We felt it was important to save and repurpose this structure, if possible.**





**Part of the appeal to me was the fact that the building seemed so ‘hunkered’ down into the side of the hill making it less a part of the rest of the property, and making it feel more secluded**





















The architect Peter Rose added more windows on both sides and on the water side, but did so in such a way as to make them appear as if they had always been there.





**On this elevation he added windows and carried the eyebrow forward over the new lakeside window, where the door had once been. This building became our get away place in the summer. We loved staying there. It made us feel as if we were on a remote lake, hundreds of miles away with the added benefit that traffic there and back was never a problem.**





**This picture shows the relationship of the building to the water, and to the pier that was built to provide a safe harbour for a steamboat that was once tied up at the end.**





**Our summer vacation house is shown overlooking the man-made finger of land projecting outwards to the pier at the end. It also shows the Peter Rose Designed house in the upper right corner, with the studio garage behind it. The White House lies behind the former power house building by the water.**







**Lower left shows the stone foundations from former greenhouses. They became Sydney's gardens. The walls helped protect the flowers from the winds which were absolutely brutal at times.**







**The main house on the original estate appears at the top of the photo. This is the home where Janina Fialkowska, the concert pianist grew up with her family.**







