

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Peter Payette, born at L'Original, Ontario, in 1850, was an instrumental character in the growth of Penetanguishene between the years of 1880 and 1913.

Payette moved to Penetanguishene in 1880. This Millwright-Engineer established a foundry and machine shop on Nelson Street at the present site of the Grew Boats Warehouse. The P. Payette Co. Foundry manufactured saw mill machinery, marine engines, boilers, and marine machinery.

The foundry fell prey to fire in 1900. Payette approached the Town of Penetanguishene and received a grant for tax exemption for ten years. This enabled him to rebuild and enlarge his foundry, creating more employment for Penetanguishene residents.

Along with the foundry, Peter also had an interest in a lath-mill in Penetanguishene. This mill was well known and held a world's record in 1911 for the production of laths - 128,350 in a ten hour work period.

Peter Payette married Miss Dorothy Trudeau and they remained childless for the length of their marriage. They built a huge house on the corner of Brock and Church Streets in 1902. Their home still stands on this site and is now called the Belcourt Apartments.

The affairs of the community were a big part of Peter Payette's life. He financially supported the Penetanguishene General Hospital and when the hospital was incorporated he sat on the Board of Directors.

His involvement in the community did not stop there. Peter was a member of the Penetanguishene Public Library Board and in 1913 he was on Town Council.

In June of 1913, Peter Payette died of a stroke.

In 1914, J. T. Payette, Peter's nephew, took up a partnership with George Copeland Jr. and purchased his uncle's foundry. The same year, Copeland discontinued his partnership and J. T. ran the mill on his own.

The foundry was once again owned and operated by the Payette family, and was to continue as an important industry in Penetanguishene.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Beauty and eloquence tend to be found in the homes of the more prominent people in a community. Special features, such as, stained glass, ornamental trim - emphasizing structural openings - and large verandahs, distinguish these buildings.

Peter Payette built his home on the north side of Brock Street Lot #25. The front facade faces Church Street and the Penetanguishene Harbour. After completion in 1902, a view of the bay was probably very picturesque, however, with the development of residential areas below its perch on the hill, the view has diminished.

In 1907, a booklet highlighting the tourism and industry of Penetanguishene - Beautiful Penetanguishene - was circulated and shows a photograph of the Peter Payette home. In comparing a photograph of the recent appearance of the building and the photograph from Beautiful Penetanguishene, the front facades are the same, however, a major alteration in the roof construction has occurred. The 1907 gable roof is very peaked and irregular with dormers and decorative finials. A flat roof and plain metal fascia now adorns the Payette home.

A metal gate is centered in the stone wall fence which extends along the frontage of the 100 by 200 foot lot. From the gate many concrete steps lead up the steep slope to the front facade of the house.

The first floor of the front facade has three main structural openings. One, a window to the left, has a semi-circular head and is defined by a cut stone head surround and stone lugsill. It is glazed with a square and semi-circular sash. Both are fixed. The second opening is a door, centered on the main facade. It is surrounded by molded trim with a transom light overhead. It is

enclosed by a porch which produces a wind break in the winter. The third opening is a window to the right of the main entrance. It is a opening with a cut stone head surround and lugsill. This window is enclosed by a double hung sash and glazing. This window composition is very common to all other windows found on all facades - including the two positioned on either end of the upper front facade. The door found on the upper front facade is also compatible with the door found on the lower facade.

The verandah - which is visible on the front facade - extends from the porch enclosing the door to the bay enclosure on the west facade facing Brock Street. The verandah is supported by round columns which have classical features.

The bay on the Brock Street facade, protrudes from the wall about 5 feet and creates an irregular pattern in the square structure. The windows of the bay are of the common type found on the upper front facade, however, the lower window is a composition of a semi-circular sash and a square sash. The lower, square sash is glazed with a fixed glass and the upper, semi-circular sash is glazed with a stained glass pattern.

Peter Payette, being a major contributor to the industrial growth of Penetanguishene, chose a very commanding site for his home. His house stood out as a major contributor to the beauty of early Penetanguishene.

Penetanguishene, a 1903 oldsmobile which can be found today at the Centennial Museum.

Mr. Beck drowned in 1915 after falling into the water from his horse.

Beck left behind 10 million dollars in assets to his children. Mary, his oldest daughter married the manager of "The Penetanguishene." Lovina, married J.B. Jennings who built the Dominion Store Foundry.

His son Jacob held various positions in the government of the municipality from 1898 to 1906, including the post of mayor in 1901-1903.

William F. became President of the C. Beck Company at the peak of the operation. His brother Alfred was in control of the lumbering areas. William was also on the town council and mayor in 1916 and contrary to his father was well liked.

The lumbering industry died because of mismanagement, relentless cutting and no reforestation. Bringing down lumber from areas as far north as Sudbury, proved to be too expensive and time consuming.

Beck's Box Factory closed down in 1969 because of a decreased demand for wooden boxes thereby ending 100 years of business. Today the Beck house is a visible sign of the early beginnings of Penetanguishene, the prosperous era in which she grew and of Charles Beck, the man who helped build it.