

House History

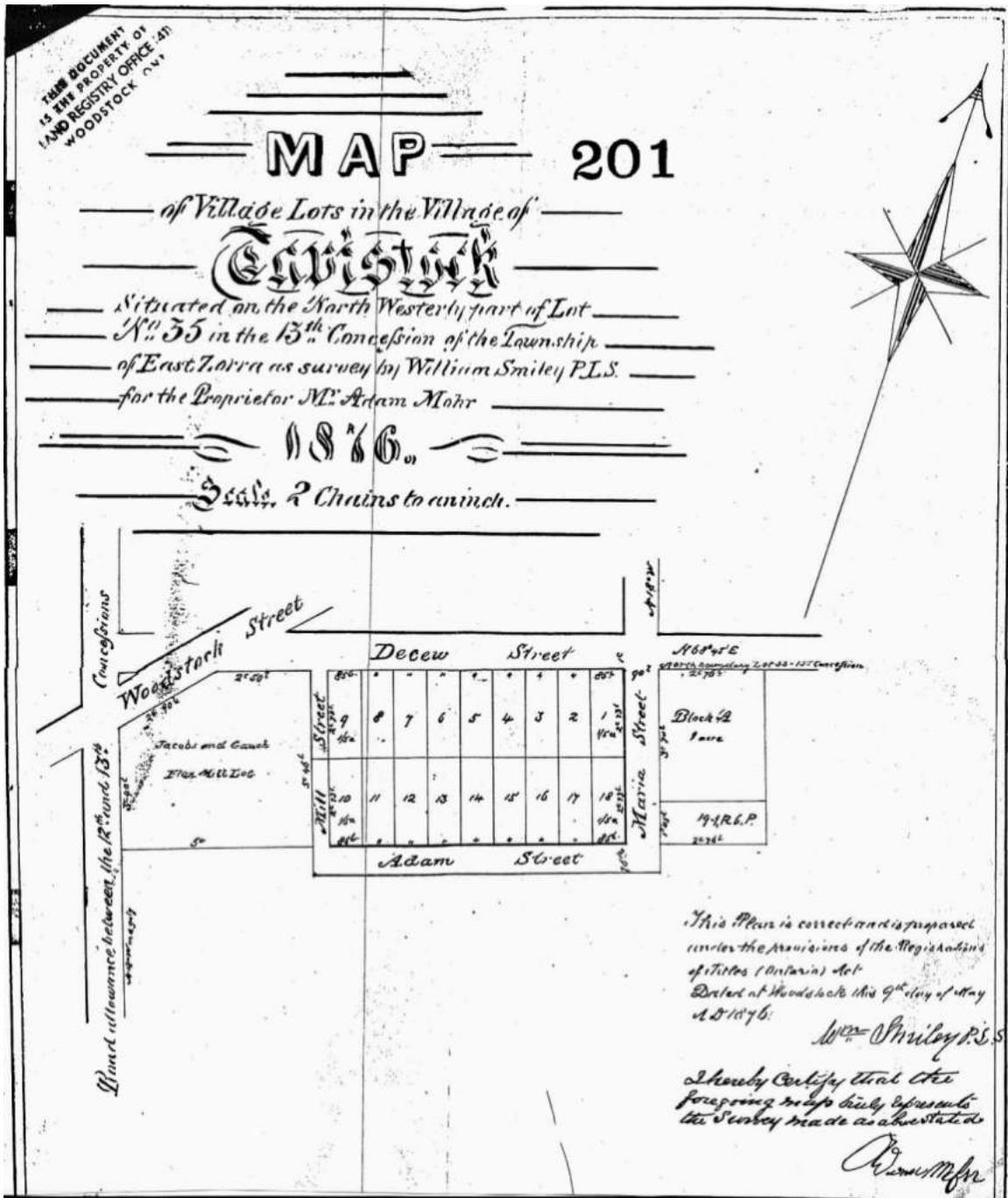
20 Adam Street, Tavistock Plan 201 and Plan 307 ... Lot 15 North Side of Adam Street, West of Maria Street

Many houses are known only by their street address. Houses with a business in the home are often referred to by the business name. In small places like Tavistock some houses are still called by the name of an owner from years and years ago.

Then there are those houses that are truly unique and known by a distinguishing characteristic. Such is the case here. This home has been “the magnolia tree house on Adam Street” to generations of local people. One prior owner proudly boasted that they bought the property because it had a magnolia tree in front for her and a barn in the back for her husband. The house in the middle was a bonus.



This property was first known as Lot 15 on Plan 201, the Mohr Survey of 1876. Adam Mohr, a local farmer, had commissioned the survey in order to sell off part of his farm land for a new housing development in Tavistock.



Plan 201 - Mohr Survey - 1876

Registry Office records tell us that the majority of the lots on Adam Street were sold on the same day ... November 4, 1876. This certainly suggests a public auction sale of the lots.

Lot 15 (now 20 Adam Street) and Lot 14 (now 26 Adam Street) were sold to Levi Wildfang. While officially separate, the two lots were linked together as a package for 70 years.

There was just one little problem. On the same day that Lot 15 was sold to Levi Wildfang it was also recorded as sold to Louis Geisel.

Registry Office records are a wonderful piece of history telling us who purchased property, when, how much land was involved and sometimes but not always in the early days, what was paid. For many years all the records were written by hand based on a variety of inputs. Invariably the input was correct but there were times when wrong data was entered or transactions missed entirely or, as in this case, there was a little bit of expedient bookkeeping.

For very likely good reasons at the time but unknown today, a part of Lot 15 was carved out for sale to Louis Geisel. The amount of land wasn't officially surveyed but it was an official sale.

Louis Geisel was born in Germany in 1853 and came to Canada when he was 16 years old. He married Anna Maria Augusta Zieman in 1877 in Downie Township and the two started a family and a nomadic existence moving from town to town. The many moves made sense given that Louis was listed as a pedlar in the census data.

Levi Wildfang, the other owner of Lot 15 and also Lot 14, was a different matter altogether. He was a farmer, a minister and a familiar name in the Registry Office records. Levi was born in 1827 in Waterloo County. Shortly after marrying Mary Webber in 1850, the couple moved to what was then called "the wilds of Zorra" and cleared a farm near Tavistock. A few years later Levi had the call to Christian ministry and became a circuit (travelling) minister. Poor health resulted in his return to farming. When the Wildfangs celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary Mrs. Wildfang was gifted with a gold-beaded silk umbrella. Levi received the gold-headed cane shown in this photo.



Levi Wildfang circa 1910

For many years Levi Wildfang bought property, rented property and sold property in Tavistock. It is not surprising that he was a buyer in the new development on Adam Street.

Of course, by now we are all wondering about a house on Lot 15. Was one built? When might this have happened? What did the house look like? So many questions. Sadly, so few answers. Registry Office records tell us when land was bought and sold. They don't tell us when houses were constructed. This information is sometimes available in either the local newspaper or local family histories. The Tavistock Gazette was founded years later in 1895 so no answers there. Similarly, nothing in any available family records. Best guess is that yes, a house of some sort was built on Louis Geisel's part of Lot 15 for his family. A pedlar was unlikely to buy land as an investment only. Levi Wildfang, on the other hand, may well have simply bought the lots for resale and profit at a later date.

Louis Geisel held on to his part of Lot 15 for three years, selling to John Stewart in 1879. There is no subsequent transaction showing a sale by John Stewart. His name and that part of Lot 15 simply disappear from the records.

Levi Wildfang held on to his part of Lot 15 and Lot 14 for five years, selling both lots in 1881 to Lorenz Nau.

Lorenz Nau's obituary in the Tavistock Gazette tells us that he was born in Germany in 1826 and emigrated to Canada in 1852. Lorenz and his wife, Elizabeth Harmon, farmed in South Easthope Township and, according to the obituary, lived in Tavistock for a number of years. Lorenz Nau owned the lots for 10 years and sold both in 1891.

The next owner was Henry Lotz, also a German immigrant and also a farmer. He would have been 70 years old when he bought the property, almost certainly as a retirement home for himself and wife, Catherine Young.

In 1909 Robert Facey, the executor for Henry and Catherine Lotz, sold Lots 15 and 14 to Issacher Corp. Now the information and details and colour commentary start to come alive. Each lot was listed as 1/5 acre in size. The sale price for each lot was \$750.

Issacher Corp clearly bought the two lots as investment properties as the Corp family remained on their farm in East Zorra Township. The few Assessment Records from that era tell us that Jacob Quehl was a tenant in the house on Lots 14 and 15 (listed jointly) in 1909 and again in 1911 and 1914. Jacob, a bachelor, worked as a drain digger.

Suddenly Adam Street was starting to make the news. In 1910 a petition was read at the Tavistock Village Council asking that the street be widened and a cement walk be laid. Granted. In short order Contractor Yausie had his men busy laying a sidewalk on Adam Street from Maria Street to Mill Street. Mill Street is now closed but at that time it was the west end of Adam. See Plan 201 on page 2. A flax mill (hence the street name) was on the land between Mill and William Streets.

That wasn't the end of the story. A few weeks after the new sidewalk was laid a letter was received by the Village Council from John Olies complaining that he had fallen on Adam Street owing to defective workmanship and was so badly injured he was not able to work for eight days. He wanted compensation. Granted. Mr. Olies received \$10 for lost wages.

In 1917 Henry Wettlaufer is shown as the tenant in the house on Lots 15 and 14, still listed jointly. He was about to have new neighbours. The spring editions of the 1918 Tavistock Gazette included an ad to rent a new red brick house on Adam Street. In May the Gazette noted that Mr. and Mrs. William Vogt and family from Gilbert Plains, Manitoba moved into Issacher Corp's house on Lot 14, now 26 Adam Street.

The Corps were an interesting and influential family. Issacher Corp emigrated to Canada from England in 1877 when he was 17 years old. He married Mary Quehl in 1884 and the couple farmed in East Zorra Township for 45 years before moving to Tavistock. Issacher was always keenly interested in the affairs of the Township and served as Councillor, Deputy Reeve and Reeve. He was a long-time Chairman of the Tavistock Conservative Association; a Director of the Tavistock Agricultural Society; and served on the Board of Directors and President of South Easthope Farmer's Mutual Fire Insurance Company.

Issacher and Mary's son Wilfred Corp was born in 1889. At age 20 he married Adeline Wettlaufer and the couple farmed in East Zorra Township near his parents.

In December 1928 Issacher and Mary Corp, who owned Lots 15 and 14, made a change to the land ownership arrangements. Wilfred and Adeline Corp became joint owners of Lot 15.



Above left - Lot 14. Issacher and Mary Corp moved into their red brick home, now 26 Adam Street, in 1929. Above right - Lot 15. Wilfred and Adeline Corp moved into their yellow brick home, now 20 Adam Street the same year.

When Issacher died in 1944 the Gazette reported that a private funeral service was held at the home next door of his son, Wilfred, followed by a church service at Zion Evangelical Church (now Grace United).



Issacher & Mary Corp

Photo taken some time after 1929 by their house at 26 Adam Street.

Wilfred Corp was a busy man after he moved to Tavistock. He was a Junior Inspector For Fruits and Vegetables with Oxford County; an active member and President of the Tavistock Lawn Bowling Club; a member of the Masonic Lodge; involved in the Greenshirt Hockey Club; elected to Tavistock Village Council and later served as Reeve; member of Oxford County Council; Chairman of a group of local men who founded the Tavistock Men's Club and later President of the Men's Club; Assessor for the Village of Tavistock; Trustee of SS # 15 Rockett's School Board; and Justice of the Peace for Oxford County. His farming roots stood Wilfred in good stead in 1944 when he won first prize for his plowing at the International Plowing Match.



Wilfred and Adeline Corp
circa 1934

Adeline Corp was most definitely the homemaker and is still remembered for her gardening abilities. In the Corp Family History book Adeline's granddaughter, Mary Nicklas, wrote "The house had a very large garden, always filled with vegetables, flowers, a trellis on the veranda with blue-purple clematis, fruit trees, a smoke house for butchering and a frame garage". Most notably, it was Adeline who planted the magnolia tree.

Several happy occasions were celebrated by the Corp family on Adam Street. First was the wedding of daughter Marguerite to Arthur Wiffen on June 14, 1933.



left Groom Arthur Wiffen and bride Marguerite Corp pose on the front lawn at 20 Adam Street. June 14, 1933

below ... wedding flowers in the living room on the wedding day.

The wedding write-up in the Tavistock Gazette noted that the house was "effectively decorated in pink and white streamers, large bouquets of pink and white peonies and summer flowers".



One year later in 1934 Wilfred and Adeline Corp celebrated their Silver Wedding Anniversary with a large party in their home. Once again the house was decorated with pink and white streamers and beautiful summer flowers.

Good things come in threes. On June 29, 1935 daughter Olive Corp married Werner Stein at 20 Adam Street. The living room was bedecked with bouquets of roses, peonies, ferns and orange blossoms along with green and white streamers.



Newlyweds Werner and Olive Stein and their attendants ...June 29, 1935

Life moved on. Wilfred was kept busy with his many organizations but not so busy that he couldn't find time to butcher the occasional pig that he kept on the property. Adeline's green thumb just got greener as proven in the photos below.



In 1946 the Corps sold the property and moved to another home in Tavistock.

The next owners were Ben and Clara McGregor. Ben McGregor was born in 1887 in Hespeler, Ontario. In 1910 he married Clara Grenzebach and a few years later the couple began farming in East Zorra Township. In 1946 they retired and purchased the property at 20 Adam Street.

During the time that the McGregors owned the property Adam Street was extended to run from Maria Street all the way through to William Street. This occurred in 1958. A key driving force for the extension was the new Memorial Hall (built in 1956) and the need for cars to have a few quick exits from the parking lot.

In 1959 the Men's Club held their first Sauerkraut Supper at the Memorial Hall, attracting more than 600 diners. Most unfortunately, just as the meal got underway a fuse on the transformer pole on Adam Street blew and power to the Memorial Hall was cut off. Pots of potatoes and sauerkraut and roasting pans of steaming pork were hurriedly taken to nearby homes to keep warm. After a 30-minute wait in the dark, the meal resumed.

Just recently two of Ben and Clara McGregor's many grandchildren, Donna Rudy and Arlene Wettlaufer, reminisced about their grandparents during the years they lived on Adam Street. Here is what "the grandkids" (now senior citizens) had to say.

We remember Grandma Clara as a loving, cheerful woman who was always happy to see us when we visited. We never ever heard her complain, not once. Grandma's home was always very clean and when we arrived she would usually be bustling around the house with her full apron on which, of course, was handmade by her.



right - Clara McGregor in her trademark full apron.

Grandpa Ben was much more reserved and quiet. He suffered with heart issues during his years in Tavistock.

The front porch was always freshly painted and scrubbed and there was a striped canvas shade on the west side to give shelter from the sun and wind. When we went to visit we always went to the side door beside the laneway. We never went to the front door. Unless there was a large group, the visiting was done in the cozy kitchen.

The focal point of the kitchen was the old-fashioned cookstove. It was always spotlessly clean and highly polished. The polishing was done using the waxed wrappers that bread came in. I can remember seeing the smoke rising from the wax when Grandma was polishing the hot stove. She used the cookstove for cooking and for heating during the winters in the early years when they first moved to Adam Street. In later years, as she got older, she began using the small electric stove in the kitchen more and more. Grandma was a wonderful cook and baker and made iced and decorated cookies for her grandchildren and great grandchildren every Christmas. She always had a tablecloth on the kitchen table that was appropriate for the season.

Grandma and Grandpa McGregor's house was unique as it had two sets of stairs to get upstairs. One set was in the living room in the northwest corner. It wasn't used much by the family. The back stairs off the kitchen were curved and narrow. The home had two bathrooms, a main bathroom upstairs with a tub and a small bathroom with a sink and toilet off the kitchen. We think there were three bedrooms upstairs.

The large living room was at the front of the house and there was a smaller room beside it. There was a false fireplace in the living room that Grandma decorated at Christmas with angel hair and a display. She also had a Christmas tree decorated with bubble lights, ornaments and tinsel. She had a fern stand with large ferns and succulents in the living room window and grew African violets as well.

In the back yard there was a barn where Grandpa kept his garden tools and chickens they raised for their own use. Grandpa worked the large garden with a hand cultivator. They grew beets, tomatoes and cucumbers. Grandma would pick the cucumbers when they were tiny and preserve them one jar at a time. Summer was canning season and Grandma kept very busy doing a lot of preserving.



When Grandpa died in 1959 Grandma had the public visitation at their home. She is seen in this picture with Grandpa's body in the casket in the small room beside the living room.

Grandma passed away in 1976.

The McGregor house was put up for sale by auction.

AUCTION SALE

Saturday, September 25, 1976

at 11:30 a.m.

of Real Estate, Furniture,
Antiques & Miscellaneous Articles

for the estate of

Mrs. Ben McGregor

20 Adam Street, Tavistock

Anyone wishing to see the house
prior to the sale, call auctioneers,

Amos Zehr
655-2370

Joe Zehr
655-2048

The next owners of 20 Adam Street broke the pattern. Randie and Donna Pautler were a young couple, married in 1975 and just starting their life together. They infused youth and enthusiasm into the house and made changes to make the place their own. New hardwood flooring, a big kitchen renovation, turning a bedroom into a bathroom, replacing the old winding staircase and adding patio doors to the back yard all worked to give the old house a new look. To add to the younger vibe, one of the main floor rooms became a family room / games room.

Perhaps best of all, Randie and Donna brought babies into the home. Jeffrey Pautler, born in September of 1985, was a special gift from God who joined his new parents in their Adam Street home just in time for Christmas. A second special gift arrived in 1989 in the form of Michael, a small boy that made the Pautler family complete.



left - Donna Brodrecht and Randie Pautler on their wedding day in June 1975.

below - Jeffrey and Donna Pautler with Jeffrey's teacher from the School For The Hearing Impaired



Tavistock Toddler Shows Remarkable Ability
Early Education Will Help Offset Profound Hearing Loss

In 1989 the Pautler family sold the property and moved to Granton. Sadly, Randie Pautler passed away in 2019.

Registry Office records available at the Tavistock & District Historical Society stop in 1987 when records were computerized. Information about changes in property ownership after 1987 come from other sources and memories. Neighbours remember that the next owner at 20 Adam Street was a young man who didn't stay in the neighbourhood for long. The property was then purchased by Jason and Tammy Bell. After some years Jeff and Angela Blair moved to Tavistock and into 20 Adam Street. It was Angela who said the tree was for her, the barn was for Jeff and the house in between was a bonus. Angela was a gardener and Jeff loved to tinker.

Adam Street in general has seen a lot of turnover in property and before too many years had passed (at least in Tavistock terms) there was another new family at 20 Adam Street. The new and current owners are Kristen (nee Weicker) and Ryan Cook.

The Cooks purchased the property in August of 2016. They are a busy young family with personalities perfectly suited for village life. Kristen and Ryan have kept all the charm associated with their house and property while incorporating some new elements. This family are definitely "keepers" and we look forward to seeing how the future unfolds.



20 Adam Street on a crisp fall day in 2018

**Registry Office Transaction Listings for
Lot 15 North Side of Adam Street, West of Maria Street, Tavistock
Plan 201 and Plan 307 - 20 Adam Street**

Instrument	Date	Registry Date	Grantor (Seller)	Grantee (Buyer)	Quantity	Price - where known
Bill of Sale	4 Nov 1876	16 Feb 1877	Adam Mohr & wife	Levi Wildfang & wife		
Bill of Sale	4 Nov 1876	18 Nov 1876	Adam Mohr & wife	Louis Geisel		
Bill of Sale	22 Feb 1879	10 Mar 1879	Louis Geisel & wife	John Stewart		
Bill of Sale	9 Dec 1881	31 Dec 1881	Levi Wildfang & wife	Lorenz Nau		
Bill of Sale	8 Jan 1891	13 Jan 1891	Lorenz Nau & wife	Henry Lotz	1/5 acre	
Bill of Sale	16 Jan 1909	21 Jan 1909	Robert Facey - executor for Henry Lotz deceased	Issacher Corp	1/5 acre	\$750
Grant	23 Dec 1928	17 Mar 1929	Issacher Corp & wife	Wilfred Corp & Adeline Corp	1/5 acre	\$3,275 - joint owners
Grant	11 May 1945	24 Oct 1945	Executors for Issacher Corp	Wilfred Corp		\$1
Grant	25 Nov year not legible	5 Jan year not legible	Wilfred & Adeline Corp	Benjamin McGregor		
Grant	13 Oct 1976	4 Nov 1976	Executors of Benjamin McGregor	Randie Pautler & Donna C. Pautler		

*** end of the Registry Office records available at the Tavistock & District Historical Society

1989 sale - Randie & Donna Pautler to a gentleman whose name is not known / remembered

???? sale - to Jason & Tammy Bell

???? sale - to Jeff & Angela Blair

2016 sale - to Ryan & Kristen Cook

history prepared 2019

