

## **The Corporation of the Town of Kingsville**

### **By-law**

#### **Schedule "A"**

1422 Road 3 East, Ruthven

The John S. Bruner House

#### **Description of Property:** The John S. Bruner House

Constructed in 1888, the John S. Bruner House is a 3-storey brick house in the French Second Empire academic style located in the Town of Kingsville.

#### **Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest:**

The cultural value of the house lies partly in its association with a prominent Kingsville family, the Bruners, and with one member of the family, John S. Bruner.

John S. Bruner (1852-1910) was born on the family farm in the family's "old stone mansion". As an adult, he came into possession of 100 acres of land, eventually buying his brother's 100 acres of land and taking on his father's share of 200 acres, for a total of 400 acres.

John S. Bruner is known for his association with the fruit industry as one of the most extensive fruit growers of the county. Fine peaches from his thirty-acre peach orchard at Elm Bluff Fruit Farm were his specialty. In addition, he grew apples, plums, pears and other fruit. He also raised tobacco.

Assessment records from 1888 reveal that John S. Bruner's farm also included livestock, orchard, 30 acres of fall wheat, and 60 acres of woodland. His son Guranzey was engaged with his father in operating the home farm. After his father died, he, too, became one of the most successful farmers of the district.

Bruner was one of the organizers of the Erie Tobacco Company founded in 1900, acted as its manager and was elected its President. The tobacco factory occupied nearly 22,000 square feet on three floors, employed fifty people when running at full capacity and initially turned out 1,200 pounds of chewing tobacco daily.

Bruner also had fishing interests, "stakes", in Lake Erie. In 1902, displayed in Doan's Drug Store window, was a herring caught by Mr. Bruner which was the largest ever caught in the area at 5¼ pounds and 22½ inches in length.

At the age of 21, John S. Bruner married Catherine E. Stewart in Leamington Ontario. Catherine Stewart also came from a prominent local family. She was the youngest daughter of Charles Stewart, Jr. and Mary Whittle, natives of Pennsylvania and Essex County respectively. The Bruners had six children. John S. Bruner was a Forester and an Oddfellow, belonging to the lodges at Ruthven. Politically, he was independent.

The Bruners were members of the Leamington Baptist Church.

In 1905, Mrs. Bruner died at the age of 49 years. Two years later, in 1907, Mr. Bruner married Mrs. Eva Felt of Belleville, Michigan. In 1910, at the age of 58 years, Mr. Bruner passed away in a Detroit hospital.

The cultural heritage value of the John S. Bruner house also lies in it being a particularly fine example of the French Second Empire academic style of private dwelling in Kingsville, Ontario. The 3-storey brick dwelling features a raised, cut-fieldstone foundation typical to the Kingsville vernacular, tall windows in singles, pairs and triples, a Mansard roof, a side verandah and a coach house. The house is built with tile bricks from the Broadwell Brick and Tile Yard formerly located on Division St. N., Kingsville.

### **Description of Heritage Attributes:**

Key attributes that embody the heritage value of the John S. Bruner house include several examples of fine and/or unique craftsmanship. It's a three-story square block, a simple box form. The overall composition of the house is formal and symmetrical.

Consistent with the Second Empire style, the roof of the house is a Mansard hipped roof with its top surface spreading almost to the edges of the building to maximize the volume of space beneath it. The lower pitch is steeply-angled and finished with dichromatic, hexagonal-shaped slate shingles, including a stylized decorative floral pattern in differently-coloured tiles. To provide light on the top floor, the Mansard roof is pierced with arched dormer windows decorated with large, curved hoods, i.e. molding projecting above the window to throw off rain. The decorative window surrounds, including the scrolls at either side of the base of the windows, are also common to the Second Empire style. The Bruner House has an elevated, one-story entry porch with upper full-width balcony. The front door is of the extra wide single type with sidelights and a fanlight. The house has many doors on the ground and second level which opens onto porches, balconies, balconettes and verandas.

The formal staircase is an impressive piece of workmanship. It is constructed of solid oak, with a large, hand-carved, decorative, circular newel post on the first stair. The handrail and balusters (spindles) which are also hand-carved, are made from a different type of wood which contrasts the honey-coloured oak. The staircase has a bullnose tread, a large starting step finished in a radius that curves out past the sides of the stairs.

Other notable features of the property include:

- hand-carved keystones
- the indoor floors, doors, and wide trim
- wide eaves supported by pairs of brackets in the Italianate style
- gingerbread detail on the exterior
- windows in singles, doubles, and triples
- double bay windows in front facade

The house is set very far back from the road with a dramatic approach accented by hedges lining both sides of the driveway.