

The John S. Bruner House

1422 Road 3 East, Ruthven, ON N0P 2G0

Research Report

Chain of Ownership

CHAIN OF OWNERSHIP							
CON 3 ED pt Lot 8 (SE)				1422 Road 3 East			
Instr #	Type	Date	Registered	From	To	Price	Description/Remarks
	Patent		29 Mar 1806		Henry Brooner		Lot No. 8 - 200 acres
G 313	Will	27 Oct 1857	10 Nov 1859	Henry Bruner	see Will of		
G 5706	Agreement	7 Feb 1884	28 Mar 1884	John S. Bruner	Peter Bruner	\$250 yearly	Con 3 S ½ Lot 8 - 100 acres \$250 yearly support and maintenance
G 5707	Deed	7 Feb 1884	28 Mar 1884	Peter & Jane Bruner	John Bruner	\$2000	Con 3 S ½ Lot 8 - 100 acres
GS 2955	Deed	18 Feb 1903	25 Feb 1903	John S Bruner	Catherine E Bruner	\$1000 love & affection	E ½ S ½ Lot 8 - 50 acres
GS 3411	Probate	x May 1905	3 Oct 1905	Catherine E Bruner	see Will of		
GS 3626	Deed	28 Dec 1906	5 Jan 1907	Gladys Patterson	Guernsey Bruner	\$2100	E 20 acres of SE 1/4 Lot 8
GS 3674	Deed	22 Mar 1907	25 Mar 1907	John S Bruner	Guernsey Bruner	\$1 love & affection	W ½ S ½ SE Lot 8 - 50 acres
GS 4241	Deed	4 Jun 1910	8 Jun 1910	Eva B Bruner	Guernsey Bruner	\$2000	pt of SE corner of Lot 8 - 30 acres remainder after life estate of John S Bruner
GS 6097	Agreement	22 Mar 1907	21 Nov 1919	Guernsey Bruner	John S Bruner	natural love & affection with covenants	life estate - 50 acres
GS 8800	Will	7 Jul 1935	17 Jul 1935	Guernsey Bruner	see Will of		
GS 8889	Certified	18 Nov 1935	27 Nov 1935	re: succession duty			

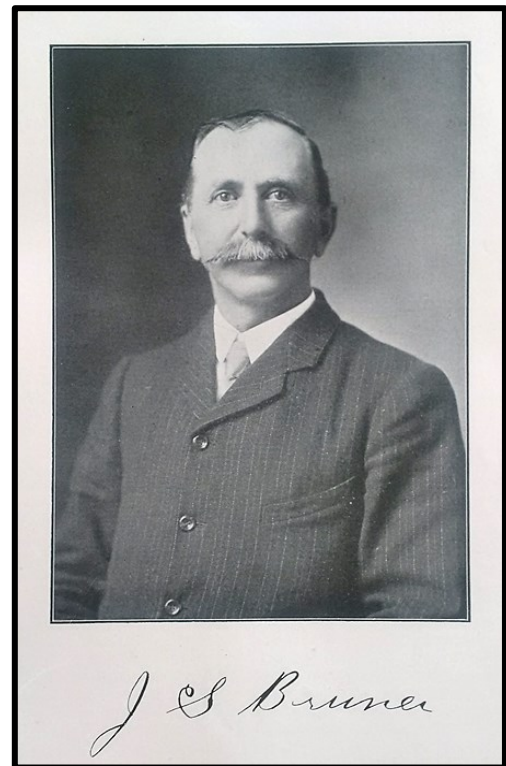
Association with Person

John Sylvester Bruner (1852-1910)

John S. Bruner was a man of many accomplishments. He was one of the leading citizens of Kingsville (Gosfield South), descended from one of the “oldest and most honourable families”¹ in Essex County. Mr. Bruner was a first-class business man, a good neighbor, an indulgent husband and father, a good citizen, and a faithful and zealous member of the Baptist church.²

John S. Bruner was born in the “old stone mansion” on the Bruner property, Gosfield South, on April 5, 1852, one of four children.³ He was the son of Peter Bruner and Maria Jane Upcott and grandson of the Reverend Henry Bruner and Elizabeth Ulch.

Early German immigration to Essex County



German immigration to Canada included a wave of Pacifists and United Empire Loyalists⁴, generated by the American Revolution 1765 - 1783,⁵ when approximately 8,000 Germans migrated to Upper Canada (southern Ontario). Some were Pacifists;⁶ others had fought with the British during the Revolutionary War. They left when the Pennsylvania Assembly passed legislation that made their loyalty to the Crown the basis for the crime of treason.⁷

A group of German settlers made a long and arduous journey from northeastern Pennsylvania to Fort Niagara. Some received land grants in the Niagara area, but a few of the Pennsylvanians drifted to other localities, among them Detroit,^{8,9} from which they waited for grants of land in Gosfield South and other points in Essex County.¹⁰

¹ *Commemorative Biographical Record of the County of Essex, Ontario*, (Toronto: J.H. Beers & Co., 1905), p. 156.

² “John S. Bruner,” *Leamington Post*, July 21, 1910.

³ *Commemorative Biographical Record of the County of Essex, Ontario*, p. 156.

⁴ Each Loyalist, head of a family and each son and daughter when they attained the age of 21 or married, was entitled to 200 acres of land, and the privilege, now treasured by their descendants, of employing the letters “U.E.” after their names to indicate their adherence to the principle of Unity of Empire.

⁵ “German Canadians,” [http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/german-canadians/Emigration and Settlement](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/german-canadians/Emigration%20and%20Settlement)

⁶ David P. Bottsford, C.M. “At the End of the Trail: A Collection of Anecdotal Histories Relating to the District Surrounding the Canadian End of the Great Sauk Trail in Anderdon, Amherstburg and Malden, Essex County, Ontario,” (Windsor Print & Litho Ltd., 1985), p. 90.

⁷ “German Canadians,” [http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/german-canadians/Emigration and Settlement](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/german-canadians/Emigration%20and%20Settlement)

⁸ Wilbur H. Siebert, *The Loyalists of Pennsylvania*, The Ohio State University Bulletin, Volume XXIV, Number 23, (University of Columbus, April 1, 1920), p.21.

⁹ Detroit remained in British hands for some years after the Revolution.

¹⁰ Kingsville-Gosfield Historical Society, *Kingsville 1790 - 2000, A Stroll Through Time*. (Kingsville-Gosfield Historical Society, 2003), pp. 5 - 6.

Each arrival to Detroit was furnished with a “location ticket” consecutively numbered, but these tickets were practically valueless until surveys of unoccupied lands were complete.¹¹ To assist in the settlement of the Loyalists, a Land Board was set up at Detroit to examine the Loyalist claims and to allocate the lots they were entitled to on the strength of their “location tickets”.¹²

It was determined early that the Loyalists would be settled on what is now the Canadian side of the Detroit River, in anticipation of the time when certain British-held military posts on the Detroit side of the border would have to be surrendered to the Americans.¹³ There were many delays — the cession of land by the “Indians” had to precede a survey, and the survey of unoccupied lands itself took time. The Land Board, before it was dissolved in 1794, succeeded in locating several hundred Loyalists along the Thames River in Kent County and in the “two Connected Townships,” the townships of Gosfield and Colchester in Essex County.¹⁴

The Bruners first emigrated from Ostend, Germany to Pennsylvania. From Pennsylvania, some (Brunners) went to live near Elmira, Ontario and some (Brunners/Bruners) came to the Olinda and Cedar Creek areas.

The Bruner Family in Essex County

John S. Bruner’s grandfather, the Reverend Henry Bruner was born October 30, 1785 in Pennsylvania, USA.¹⁵ He was a Baptist minister a farmer, a pacifist, and a United Empire Loyalist – one of the area's "first settlers" who arrived via Detroit with his mother in the late 1700s.

George, Adam, and Henry Bruner accompanied their widowed mother and lived for a time on Grosse Ile, an island in the Detroit River on the American side of the river. When their mother married a Mr. Tofflemire, the family moved to Cedar Creek, where the boys were raised.¹⁶

Henry Bruner petitioned for land when he became of age and received 200 acres by Crown Grant in 1806 in Lot 8, Concession 3, Gosfield Township. The land was heavily wooded and proved very wet, requiring much drainage. Wolves were a menace to the farmer’s stock and killed his first cow.¹⁷ In addition to clearing his land and cultivating it, Henry Bruner officiated as a minister of the Baptist Church, and much of his time was devoted to work pertaining to his spiritual calling. He lived and died in the double log house he built on his property.¹⁸

The Reverend Henry Bruner married Elizabeth Ulch and had either ten or twelve children (depending on the source relied upon), born between 1809 and 1829. The children were Mary,

¹¹ David P. Bottsford, C.M., *op. cit.* p., 90.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹³ It was with considerable vexation that the Detroit Loyalists learned, in 1794, of the terms of the Jay Treaty which provided for the British evacuation of Detroit and the other Great Lakes Posts. The date of the change-over was to be July, 1796.

¹⁴ Under the regional government system, created under Ontario premier Bill Davis in 1974, these Townships became the Municipalities of Kingsville and Essex, respectively.

¹⁵ *Commemorative Biographical Record of the County of Essex, Ontario*, p.156.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 501-502.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

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To His Excellency Peter Hunter Esquire Lieutenant Governor
of the Province of Upper Canada &c &c &c.

In Council

The Petition of Henry Brooner of the Township of Gofffield in
the County of Essex and Western District of the Province of
Upper Canada
Petitioner.

Humbly Sheweth

That your Petitioner has been twenty one years in the Province, taken
the oath of allegiance is twenty one years of age and has no fam-
ily, and has Property in the province to the amount of Fifty pounds
Province currency consisting of one York Oxen one Horse with the
necessary Utensils. That he is desirous to occupy and improve a vacant
Lot N^o 8 in the 3^d Concession in Gofffield of the Crown, that he is
prepared and undertakes, in case his Petition should be favorably
answered to pay within three days from the date of the order of
Council into the hands of His Majesty's Receiver General of this Province
as well the whole of the Fees allowed by His Majesty to be charged
on the Patent that is to issue, as the fees of Survey, and Grant.
Petitioner will within the same period produce to the Clerk of the
Council the Receiver General's Receipt for such Fees, and your Petitioner
craves leave to nominate Matthew Elliott Esquire of the Township of
Malden his Agent for executing such Deed, and undertakes that
the said Matthew Elliott Esq^r shall attend the secretary of the
Province within twenty one days from the date of the order
of Council and take such such Deed.

Wherefore your Petitioner prays that your Excellency may
be pleased to grant him two Hundred Acres of the waste Lands of the
Crown.

Henry Brooner

Malden 29th May 1853-

Recommended by me. // Elliott

Barbara, Judith, Adam, Ann, Jacob, Peter, Ruth, Margaret, Susannah, William and Thomas. Reverend Henry Bruner later had two more wives: “the widow” Tron and “the widow” Moody.

John S. Bruner’s father, Peter Bruner, was born August 2, 1819 on the farm. He assisted in much of the farm’s clearing, and received a share of the property which he farmed all his life, living to see the whole farm under cultivation.¹⁹ Peter Bruner married Jane Upcott of Olinda, and together they had four children: Maria Annie, Ozias, Philetus and John S. Bruner.²⁰ Politically, Peter Bruner was a Reformer. In church affairs, he was a Baptist who took a very prominent part in the work of his church, giving liberally to its various charities and missions. In material affairs, he was a very successful man.

John S. Bruner was born on the family farm on April 5, 1852, 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.²¹

In Canada, only southern Ontario and British Columbia are capable of large-scale production of tender fruit which includes peaches and nectarines, pears, sweet and sour cherries, plums and apricots. There are two major tender fruit areas in Ontario. The Niagara Peninsula below the Niagara Escarpment is Ontario’s largest fruit-growing area. The second area is Essex and Kent counties, which have the longest growing season in Ontario.²² John S. Bruner first became interested in the fruit industry in 1888 and pursued it, eventually becoming one of the most extensive fruit growers of the country.²³ Fine peaches from his thirty-acre peach orchard at Elm Bluff Fruit Farm were his specialty. He also grew apples, plums, pears and other fruit. He also raised tobacco.

Assessment records from 1888 reveal that John S. Bruner’s farm also included 26 cattle, 12 sheep, 30 hogs,²⁴ 10 horses, 7 acres of orchard and garden, 30 acres of fall wheat under cultivation and 60 acres of woodland. His son Guranzey was engaged with his father in operating the home farm.²⁵ After his father died, he, too, became one of the most successful farmers of the district.²⁶

Bruner was one of the organizers of the Erie Tobacco Company founded in 1900,²⁷ acted as its manager and was elected its President.²⁸ 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.²⁹

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ *Commemorative Biographical Record*, op.cit., p.156.

²¹ Ibid.,156.

²² John Gardner, OMAFRA Factsheet: *What You Should Know About Fruit Production in Ontario*, 04-045

²³ *Commemorative Biographical Record*, p. 157.

²⁴ In 1895, he lost 34 hogs to hog cholera. *The Windsor Evening Record*, December 19, 1895.

²⁵ *Commemorative Biographical Record*, p. 156.

²⁶ Geranzey [sic.] C. Bruner obituary, *Leamington Post*, June 6, 1935.

²⁷ Ron Brown, *The Lake Erie Shore: Ontario's Forgotten South Coast*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009), p.109.

²⁸ “Patrons of Industry” *The Essex Free Press*, February 15, 1895, p. 1.

²⁹ “Erie Tobacco Co.’s Works: A Short Description of Another of Kingsville’s Manufacturing Institutions,” *The Kingsville Reporter*, July 12, 1900, p. 4.

In 1895, Bruner was elected President of the Essex County Patrons of Industry at the group's annual meeting at Temperance Hall, Essex, Ontario.³⁰ The Patrons of Industry was dedicated to upholding and encouraging the moral, social, intellectual, political and financial situation of farmers and to preserve the way of life that existed in farming communities in the late nineteenth century against encroaching industrialization. It cooperated with the urban labour movement to address the political frustrations of both groups with big business. The Patrons ran candidates in the 1894 Ontario provincial election.

Bruner also had fishing interests, "stakes", in Lake Erie.³¹ 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.³² There are other interesting mentions of Mr. Bruner in newspapers of the time. For example, in 1897, he was paid \$4 to "watch" the beach at Cedar Creek³³.

Private Life:



Catherine E. Stewart

John S. Bruner married Catherine E. Stewart on March 2, 1873 in Leamington, Ontario.³⁴ The groom was 21 years old and the bride was 18 years old.

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. They owned a large tract of land west of Division Road, Kingsville. In 1835, Stewart, Phillip Fox, and Thomas Whittle had also established a settlement on the Mersea-Gosfield Townline (Albuna Townline or Hwy. 31) at a small clearing on the Ridge.³⁵ Charles Stewart Jr. died at the home of his daughter, Catherine Bruner in 1893, aged ninety-three.³⁶

³⁰ *The Essex Free Press*, February 5, 1895.

³¹ *Amherstburg Echo*, December 26, 1902, p.1.

³² *Amherstburg Echo*, December 9, 1902

³³ *The Essex Free Press*, June 11, 1897, p.6.

³⁴ Marriage Records of Essex County, 1863.

³⁵ *Commemorative Biographical Record of the County of Essex, Ontario*, p. 156.

³⁶ Ibid.

MARRIAGES.

	GENERAL No.	GENERAL No.	GENERAL No.
His Name.	John Thompson	John T Bruner	Peter. Goodharts
Age.	43	21	26
Residence when Married.	Mersia	Gosfield	Wallacubing
Place of Birth.	County of Durham England	Gosfield	Florence
Bachelor or Widower. (B. or W.)	B	B	B
Rank or Profession.	Farmer	Farmer	Farmer
Names of Parents.	Thomas and Mary Thompson	Peter and Jane Bruner	John and Ann Frontwith
Her Name.	Eliza Ann Stewart	Catherine Stewart	Matilda Ann Robson
Age.	29	18	29
Residence when Married.	Mersia	Mersia	Mersia
Place of Birth.	Mersia	Mersia	Mersia
Spinster or Widow. (S. or W.)	S	S	S
Names of Parents.	Charles and Mary Stewart	Charles and Mary Stewart	James & Ann Robson
Names and Residences of Witnesses.	Isiah Black Francis Morell both of Mersia	George Mersunder Adeline Stewart Gosfield	George Robson James Robson Mersia
Date and Place of Marriage.	February 24 th 1873 Lamington	March 2 1873 Lamington	March 12 th 1873 Lamington
Religious Denomination of Bridegroom.	W. M	B.	C. E
Religious Denomination of Bride.	B	B	C. E
By whom Married.	J. A. Daugherty	C. E. Benson	J. A. Daugherty
By License or Banns. (L. or B.)	L.	L.	L.
Division.	Mersia	Mersia	Mersia
County.	Essex	Essex	Essex
REMARKS.			



From left: Guranzey, Mrs. Catherine Bruner, Mary, Peter, Gladys, Eva and John S. Bruner

The couple had six children: Mary Luella who married a dentist in Detroit, MI; Peter Charles who became a dentist in Vancouver, BC; Guranzey Carlisle, who worked with his father in operating the home farm and eventually took it over; Gladys Nellie and Eva Blanche who lived at home, and Gracie who died at 8 months of age.³⁷ Both Peter and Guranzey attended business college in “the Maple City”, Chatham, Ontario.³⁸

John S. Bruner was a Forester³⁹ and an Oddfellow⁴⁰, belonging to the lodges at Ruthven. Politically, he was independent.

The Bruners were members of the Leamington Baptist Church.⁴¹

In 1905, Mrs. Bruner died at the age of 49 years.⁴² Two years later, in 1907, Mr. Bruner married Mrs. Eva Felt of Belleville, Michigan.⁴³ In 1910, at the age of 58 years, Mr. Bruner passed away in a Detroit hospital.

*Ruthven United Cemetery
Talbot Street W. & Albuna Town Line,
Ruthven, ON*



³⁷ *Commemorative Biographical Record of the County of Essex, Ontario*, p.157.

³⁸ *The Windsor Evening Record*, December 19, 1895.

³⁹ Philanthropy and virtue featured prominently in the principles and ritual of the Society. “The object of Forestry is to unite the virtuous and good in all sects and denominations of man in the sacred bonds of brotherhood so that while wandering through the Forest of this World they may render mutual aid and assistance to each other”.

⁴⁰ In addition to fraternal and recreational activities, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows promotes the ethic of reciprocity and charity, by implied inspiration of Judeo-Christian ethics.

⁴¹ *Commemorative Biographical Record of the County of Essex, Ontario*, p.156

⁴² Grave marker, Ruthven United Cemetery, Ruthven, ON

⁴³ “Married at Belleville, Mich.,” *Kingsville Reporter*, October 17, 1907, p.1.

Persons at the time of Enumeration										Intersections									
Persons at the time of Enumeration										Intersections									
Male	Female	Total	Under 15	15 to 25	25 to 35	35 to 45	45 to 55	55 to 65	65 and over	Male	Female	Total	Under 15	15 to 25	25 to 35	35 to 45	45 to 55	55 to 65	65 and over
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The John S. Bruner House

The John S. Bruner House is a 3-storey French Second Empire brick dwelling built in 1888. The house is set very far back from the road with a dramatic approach accented by hedges lining both sides of the driveway.

The house features a raised, carved-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.

The house originally consisted of 32 rooms.⁴⁴ The original house survives largely intact, although altered somewhat in floor plan and appearance. For example, a hallway door has been blocked, windows which used to open have been replaced with fixed glass, extremely ornate wooden porches are gone and some of the graceful wrought iron roof trim has been lost.

The home was surrounded by lawns and gardens which, according to one reporter, grew “still more attractive” each year.⁴⁵



⁴⁴ Census of Canada, 1891.

⁴⁵ *Commemorative Biographical Record of the County of Essex, Ontario*, p.156.



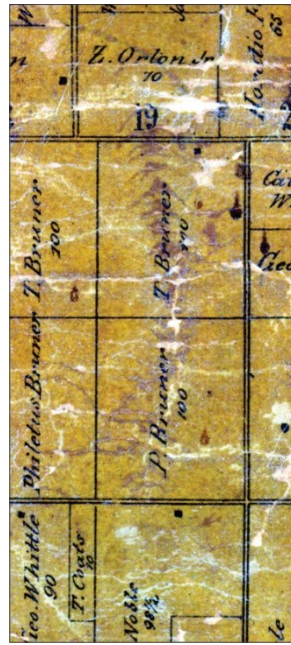
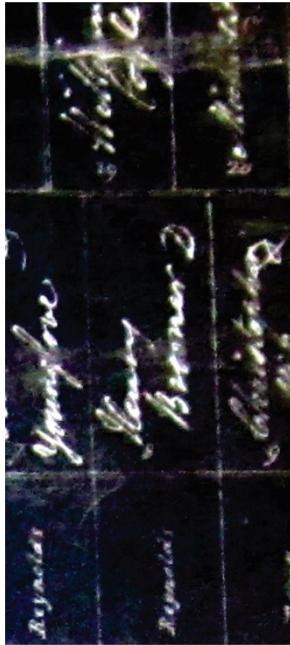
View of the John S. Bruner House from the road – this dramatic and impressive view is from approximately half way down the tree-lined driveway.



John S. Bruner House, as built, with the Bruner family sitting on the front porch and lawn



Same view of the John S. Bruner House today

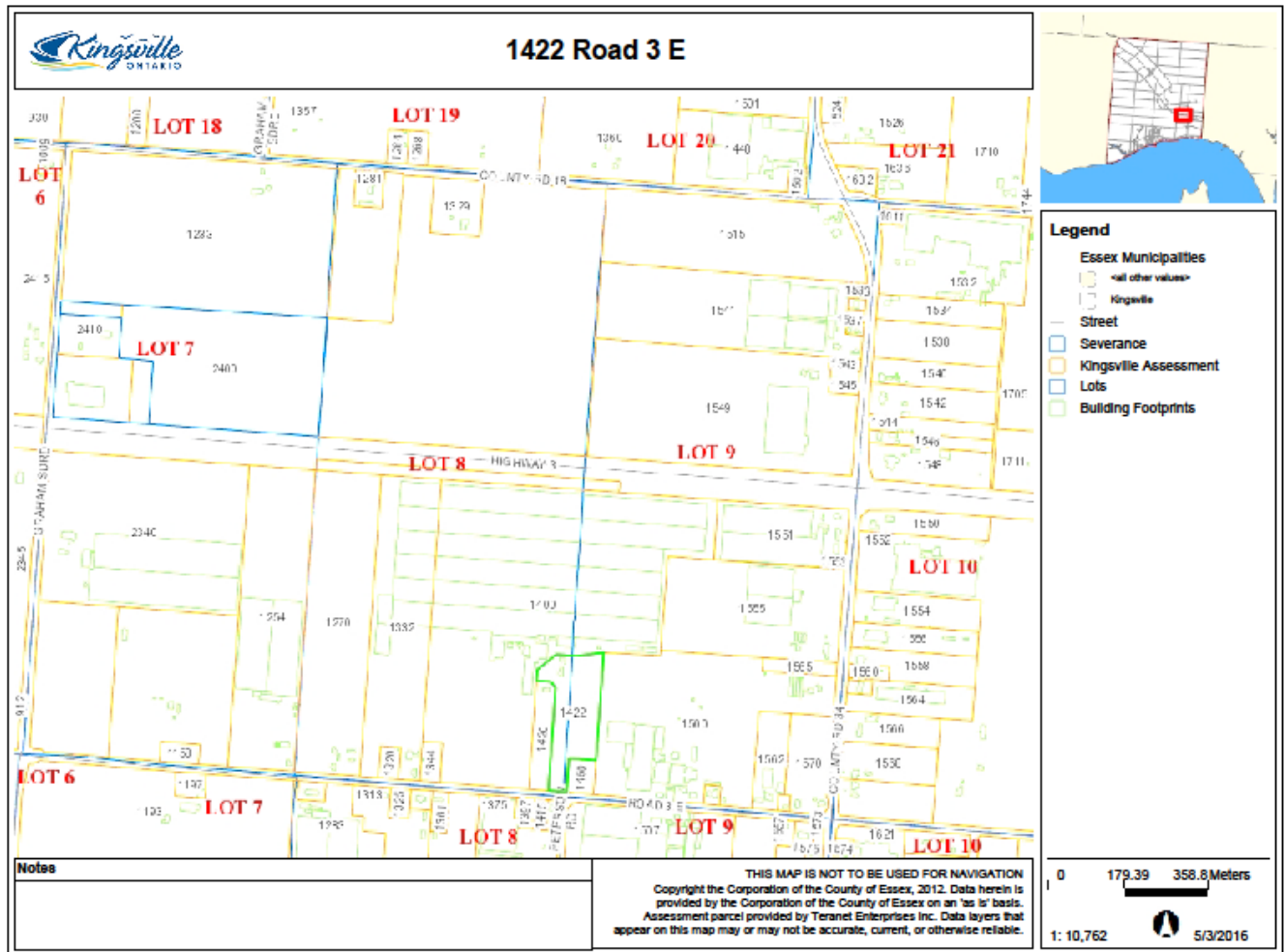


Early maps

Far left: Smith map, 1805

Left: Walling map, 1877

Below: Current map showing the Bruner property outlined in green



The John S. Bruner house was built in 1888, a fact confirmed by the date carved in the keystone over the front door. This keystone is also inscribed “J.S.B.” and decorated with a hand and finger pointed upward. keystones over the side windows are carved with calla lily flowers in pots.



Left: Keystone over the front door. Symbolism of the pointing hand: it is commonly found on Victorian tombstones whose messages conveyed in stone will, in theory, be eternal and mark an individual's life on earth. In the Christian tradition, a hand with the index finger pointing upward symbolized the hope of heaven, the pathway of ascension into heaven, heavenly reward of the righteous, and confirmation of life after death.

The triangles on the sleeve represent aspiration, the struggle to climb to the top and achieve one's earthly ambition or heavenly ascent. Eternity. The symbolism of this shape is always associated with its three sides, signifying a variety of triads such as birth, life and death; heaven, earth and human; mind, body and soul; body, soul and spirit. In the Christian tradition, the triangle represents Faith, Hope and Charity, and the Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost.



Left: Keystone over side window. A symbol reminiscent of the Victorian era, the calla lily represents majestic beauty and is often used to represent marriage or resurrection. The use of lilies at funerals symbolizes the restored innocence of the soul at death.

In many paintings and other works of art throughout history, the calla lily has been depicted with the Virgin Mary or Angel of Annunciation. For this reason, it has been associated with holiness, faith and purity. Additionally, as the flowers blossom in spring, they have become symbols of youth and rebirth.

The John S. Bruner family moved into the house, along with two additional extended family members and two “domestics.”⁴⁶ According to a local newspaper at the time, the “commodious three-storey residence would do credit to a city,” and was “vastly comfortable, being supplied with modern conveniences, furnace heat and running water.”⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Census of Canada, 1891.

⁴⁷ “Sketches of Early Settlers,” *Leamington Post*, July 18, 1984, p.4.

The Second Empire Architectural Style

France's First Empire collapsed in 1815. The Second Empire was led by Napoléon III, nephew of Napoléon I, who restored the monarchy and reigned as Emperor from 1852 to 1870. The Second Empire architectural style originally flourished during this period.

The Second Empire style was born out of the optimistic and heady early years of Napoleon III's reign, when, buoyed by public support and economic prosperity, the new Emperor rebuilt Paris in a manner reflecting national and dynastic ambitions.⁴⁸ He undertook a major building campaign that transformed Paris into a city of grand boulevards and monumental buildings that were copied throughout Europe and the New World.⁴⁹

Second Empire is a rich, ornate and, at times, formidable style. The style borrows heavily from French historical precedents. Its most distinctive and its distinguishing feature is the mansard roof, a two-sloped, hipped roof based on a 16th century prototype. Its first appearance can be attributed to Pierre Lescot who built it in the 1550s as part of the Louvre. The feature had already been revived once in France in the late 1600s by French architect Francois Mansart [sic] who used the roof so often that it came to bear his name. It is said that the Mansard roof style originally resulted from a tax evasion scheme, resulting from the fact that French property owners were taxed by the number of floors in their building. Attic space was not classed as a floor. This style of roof allows for more usable space, gaining a full storey in the attic that was spacious, liveable – and tax free.⁵⁰

The Second Empire style quickly became the most popular and the official architectural style in France. From France, the style was soon exported to England, and across the pond to the United States. The style finally arrived in Canada largely via the U.S. but never achieved the same popularity here as in the U.S. In North America, because of the expense of designing buildings with all the elaborate detailing found in European examples, Second Empire was first taken up by wealthy businessmen for home construction. It was favoured because people wanted a style that was considered both fashionable and reflective of their cosmopolitan tastes.⁵¹ Also, the intangible qualities embodied by these large houses, such as stability, wealth, progress and power, were desirable associations for aspiring gentlemen.

In Canada, where its popularity peaked in the 1870s, there were variations of this style: while most public buildings were more closely French-inspired, Second Empire homes often borrowed from the Italianate and Gothic styles. This style is essentially urban; most Second Empire buildings recorded by the Canadian Inventory of Historic Buildings are located in cities and towns.⁵²

⁴⁸ Robert Mikel, *Ontario House Styles: The distinctive architecture of the province's 18th and 19th century homes*, (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., 2004) p. 75

⁴⁹ <http://www.buffaloah.com/a/archsty/sec/>

⁵⁰ <http://oldhouseliving.com/2012/01/29/the-mansard-style/>

⁵¹ <http://www.ontarioarchitecture.com/Second.htm>

⁵² Cameron, Christina & Wright, Janet, *Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History No. 24, Second Empire Style in Canadian Architecture, Second Empire for Canadian Houses*, (Last Updated: 2006-09-15) <http://parkscanadahistory.com/series/chs/24/chs24-1n.htm>

In its time, the Second Empire style was viewed as a contemporary "modern" style, rather than a revival style, since it was popular in France and North America simultaneously and its combined design elements did represent a new building form.⁵³ Beautiful ornamentation helped make the Second Empire style popular, but also may have helped push it into obscurity, as plainer building styles became more popular during the early 20th century.

Typical Second Empire features found in the John S. Bruner House

The John S. Bruner House is an imposing, Second Empire style house. It's a three-story square block, a simple box form. The overall composition of the house is formal and symmetrical.

Roof

One of the first things you notice about the house is the roof. In the Second Empire style, the roof of the house is in a Mansard hipped roof with its top surface spreading almost to the edges of the building in order 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. The top, or attic floor, behind the roof would have been the dormitory for the servants.

At one time, the roof also had cast iron cresting embellishments at the roofline and on the top of balconies. These cast iron, Second Empire embellishments can be seen on the photograph of the John S. Bruner House as built (*see page 10*). Although still intact in some examples, this original cresting has often deteriorated and been removed as it was here. In some cases, such as this house, lightning rods were integrated into the cresting design, making the feature useful beyond its decorative features.



Bruner House's Mansard roof with 3 dormers

Windows

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.

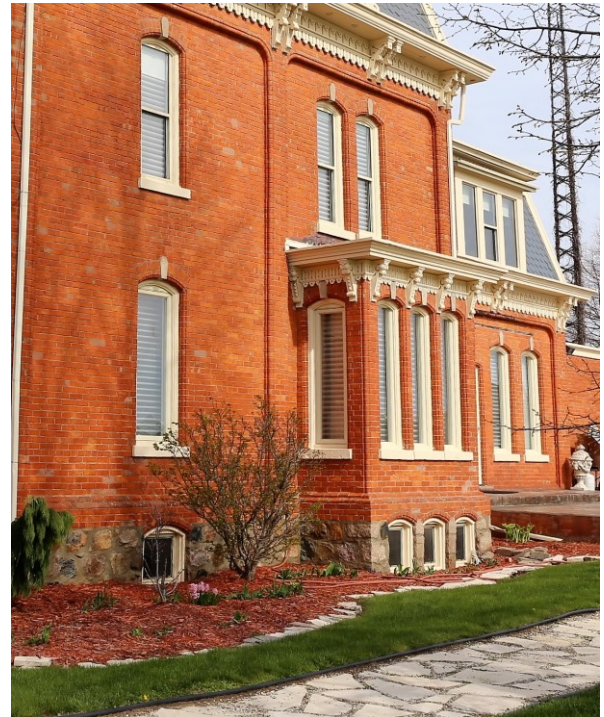


Three-sided bay windows are typical of the Second Empire Style.

⁵³ Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission,
<http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/architecture/styles/second-empire.html>

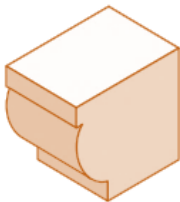


Inside view of one of the two front bay windows. Photo also shows coved ceiling.

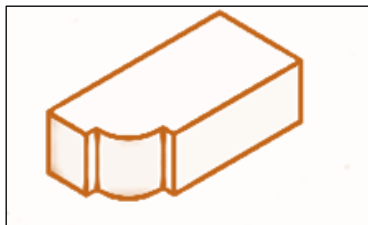


Above: First and second floor windows are very tall, one-over-one sash type, (some replaced by one fixed pane) segmentally-arched with carved stone keystones. The grouping of windows in twos or threes is a typical feature. Windows are flanked by brick trim which both accents the windows and breaks up the width of the walls.

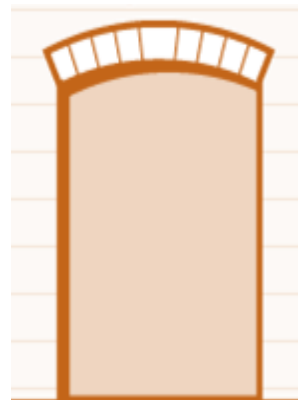
Some of the special bricks used in the Bruner House:



Corbel Pedestal brick



Single bullnose window reveal brick



Segmental arch (arch that is less than a semi-circle) with keystone



Entrance

Second Empire entrances are typically elevated above the grade by several steps and doors are typically double doors or an extra wide single door. 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.



Left: Arched front door

Below: Upper level bedroom door onto balcony above front door, with transom



Left: French doors in second storey back room where the servants' stairs are also located





The house has many doors on the ground and second level which open onto porches, balconies, balconettes and verandas.⁵⁴ These areas would allow members of the family to have some private space.



⁵⁴ A balcony is a platform built out from and only accessible from an upper story room or corridor. A balconette is the same, but smaller. A veranda or porch is a sheltered area, usually roofed and sometimes partly enclosed that extends along an outside wall of a house. The John S. Bruner House possesses all of the above.

Additional Features

Pierced Dentils

Second Empire sculptural scrollwork ornaments

Patterned polychrome roof
with hexagonal tiles



Wide Italianate-style cornice
(crowning projection)

Italianate influence in double brackets

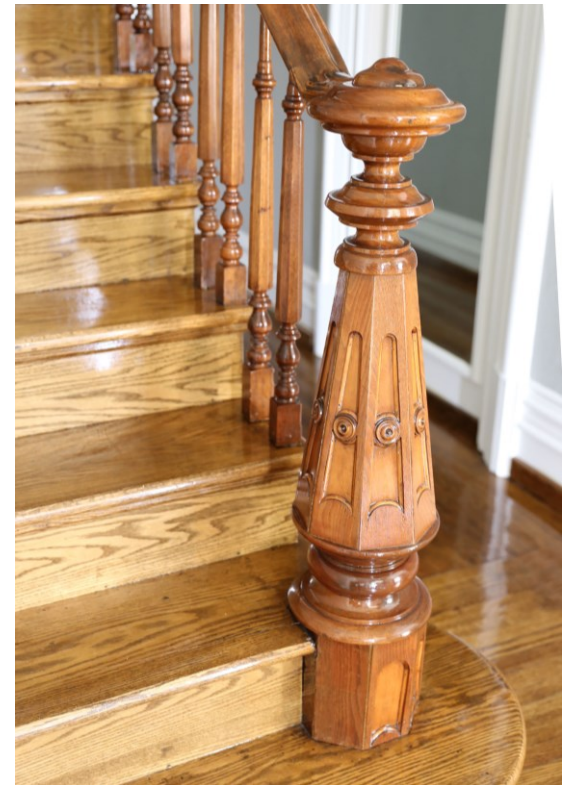
Gingerbread scrollwork frieze



Pierced, scrolled brackets on veranda

Striking Formal Staircase

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.

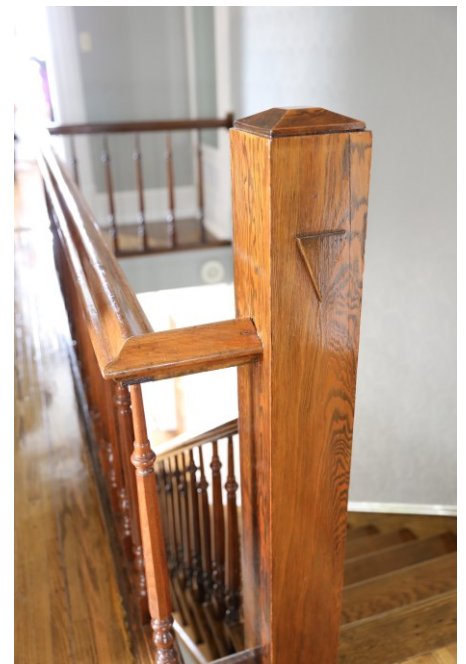


The staircase has a bullnose tread, a large starting step finished in a radius that curves out past the sides of the stairs.

A bullnose tread, as opposed to a squared first tread, gives stairs a softer, rounded appearance.

As is common in homes built for the well-to-do during this period, this is a front, "formal" staircase. There is also an informal, utilitarian staircase at the back of the house leading to the servants' quarters on the third floor and for their exclusive use.

*Detail from servants' staircase
at the back of the house*





Transom windows can be found in older homes and buildings constructed prior to electric lighting. Transom windows were used for the purpose of bringing in more ambient light and they also function as ventilation. In this case, a transom window brings light into the upstairs hallway.

Solid wood, five-panel doors, along with finely-crafted mill work and extensive trim are also found throughout the house.



Left and below: Interior walls of the John S. Bruner House are very thick and the molding is lavish and extraordinary.



Detail: Ornate hinge on back/side door



Extra-large back/side door with extra-large glass panel



Above: Design in oak floor at the foyer



Above: Typical oak floor



Left: Second storey door to laundry chute



Above: Detail of window trim/panel beneath window



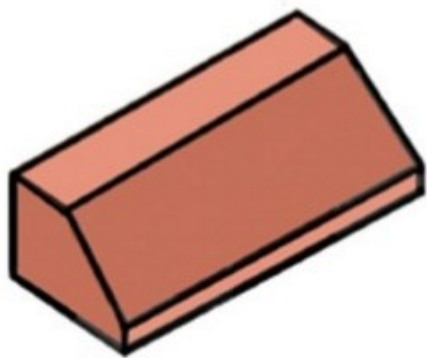
Wooden corner protectors



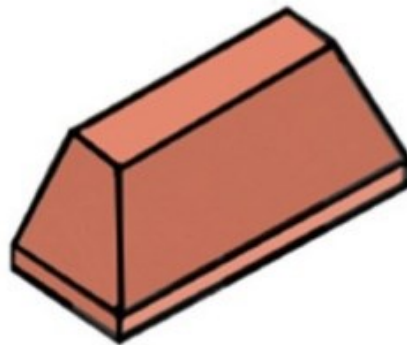
Cut fieldstone, raised foundation in the Kingsville vernacular. Use of plinth bricks as a decorative element and to alter the width of the wall.

Plinth Bricks

Plinth bricks are chamfered and can be used as a decorative feature or to alter the width of a wall.



Plinth stretcher



External Plinth



Stone foundation, single and triple windows



Single bullnose window reveal brick

Other examples of Second Empire architecture in Canada:



Woodstock, ON



Montreal City Hall



Above: Glanmore House, 1882, Belleville, ON

Left: Interior, Paris, ON. Note that the narrowness of the hallway, the height of the baseboards, the bullnose step and, especially, the carved newel post resemble the John S. Bruner House.

Note about the (similar) Jonas Wigle House

The John S. Bruner house is *very* similar architecturally and in building materials to the Jonas Wigle House at 1423 McCain Side Road, which has previously been designated as a Kingsville heritage property. Both houses were built in 1888.

In fact, there are three very similar houses built in the area by the same architect, the third house being in Harrow (Essex, ON). It is said that these homes would fit one inside the other like Russian dolls!



Jonas Wigle House, Kingsville, ON