

# “Stoneacre”, the Joseph Teskey Home

Report by Linda Hamilton June 2009

492 River Road, Appleton  
Mississippi Mills, Ontario

This beautiful home in Appleton deserves to be recognized and protected. It has strong links to the history of the community of Appleton. It has been meticulously restored and preserved with many original features still intact.

## **Architectural Features:**

**Dates:** Main house built 1837, Kitchen and Carriage Shed built 1842

**Style:** Scottish Georgian.

**Dimensions:** Unknown

**Architect:** Unknown

**Current Owners:** Lynn and Mark Attley, owners since 2001.

## **Construction:**

This home was built of stone, presumably local limestone. A full stone basement/foundation has a dirt floor with a channel cut into it to drain water. Originally the exterior walls were parged but this was removed at some point in the history of the home revealing the stone. The interior walls are plastered with some paneling (in dining room) and large baseboard moldings which are also original. (see images) The interior wood is pine and maple. There is a porch along the front of the kitchen (see Entrance To Kitchen.jpg), as well as a porch wrapping around the front and side of the main house (see Front Porch.jpg and Porch From Backyard.jpg). The exterior trim is painted white and the gabled roof is shingled with black tar shingles. Four large stone chimneys sit above the four gables of the roof. (see Exterior1.jpg) The two parts of the home, the main house and the kitchen, were originally not attached, but were connected by an enclosed breezeway sometime early in the history of the home. There is exposed brick in the breezeway that indicates that it was an exterior wall at one time.

## **Openings:**

The main floor windows are 12/12 paned double hung sashes. Most of the panes are original. All of the other windows have been replaced with exact reproductions using original latches. The kitchen main floor windows 6/6 paned double hung sashes. The upstairs windows are also 6/6 panes. The stone walls mean that the windows are very deep. They are angled slightly to maximize the light coming in. All of the doors are original painted pine, though new screen doors have been installed. The solid kitchen door has had a large window inserted into it to let more light in and make use of the view. It has an original four paned light above. The wide front door has beautiful original fan light above with 25 panes of glass in 3 rows and two side lights with 14 smaller panes arranged around a larger pane, and paneling below (see Front Door.jpg). A small powder room is housed between the two parts of the house, in the breezeway, which has a beautiful multi-paned window (see Powder Room Window.jpg). The door leading from the breezeway into the main house also has a beautiful window above (see Door To Main House.jpg). There is no access between the second stories of the two parts of the house.

## **Notable Features:**

The most notable feature of this home is the three-arched stone carriage shed behind the kitchen. The arches lead into a large open space now being used as a garage. (see Carriageshed.jpg) One of the arches is enclosed by a door. The abundance of other original features include: a stone hearth with bake oven in the kitchen, a built in cupboard in the dining room, pine flooring throughout

the main house, staircase with handrail, a stone retaining wall at the front of house topped with a wrought iron gate (see Exterior2.jpg). Large mature trees surround the home. It is also interesting to note that the only sidewalk in Appleton is in front of the property.

### **History:**

This home is intimately connected with the history of Appleton, as well as the larger history of the growth of Upper Canada. The Teskeys who built the home were the founding family of Appleton and their influence in that community was very strong. The later history of the home and the beautiful condition that it is still in, indicates that it has occupied a strong place in the development of the community.

The Teskey family was a part of the Peter Robinson emigration of poor Irish families from County Cork to Upper Canada. They came as a group of 11 (likely John, his wife Anne, and their children) in 1823 on the ship the "Hebe". John was given land at lot 7 concession 11 in Ramsay, while Joseph, his eldest son, was given 100 acres at lot 4 concession 10 where Apple Tree falls was located on the Mississippi River. Joseph was born in 1799, so was 24 when he came to Canada. He and his brothers John and Robert set up a small saw and grist mill using the abundant water power of the Mississippi. The brothers prospered and built larger mills. The settlement that soon grew up around these mills became known as Teskeyville. Robert continued operating a sawmill, and Joseph a grist mill. Joseph married Margaret Cuthbert on January 18, 1838. They eventually had 5 children, Milton, Franklin, Lois, Luther, and Eunice. The home now known as Stoneacere was built in 1837, presumably to welcome Margaret as a bride. The addition was added in 1842 to house a kitchen, and living quarters for servants and migrant workers as well as a carriage shed. The home stayed in the Teskey family until the early 1900s. Another Teskey brother, Albert, started a general store and post office in the 1850s. At that time the name of the settlement became known as Appleton. Robert's son John A Teskey inherited the woolen mill at Appleton which became a part of the Collie Mills. The mill burned down in the 1950s but the ruins are still visible today. Joseph Teskey died in 1866 at the age of 67 and is buried in the Methodist Cemetery in Almonte.

Apparently, the Stewart sisters lived in the home for many years in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are accounts of elderly people who remember being entertained there by the sisters. Later owners were Julian and Elizabeth Smith. He is a renowned restoration architect who had his office at the general store on the corner in Appleton and has since gone on to work in Ottawa to great acclaim (see notes below). The Smiths sold the property to the current owners, the Attleys, in 2001. The home is currently known as Stoneacre but has been known as Burnbank as well. The home has received a lot of attention through the years due to its beautiful architecture and unique original features. It has been a part of Doors Open and the owners encourage anyone interested in the history of the Teskey family to drop by.

### **Construction History and Current Building:**

As mentioned above, the two parts of the house were built separately; the main house first in 1837, and the kitchen/carriage shed in 1842.

The rooms in the main house are laid out in traditional Georgian style with a main hallway leading to an office space on the right (now a library), a dining room behind, and the parlour on the left. The large main floor parlour has a square archway where a wall would have once divided the space into two separate rooms. The dining room was used as the kitchen before the large kitchen addition was built. It has a built-in cupboard which sits in the space that used to be occupied by the hearth (see Dining-Room-Cupboard.jpg). The original hearth chimney is now used to house the chimney for the gas furnace. The wainscoting in the dining room is original. The stairs are directly facing the front door. There were four bedrooms upstairs, one of which was made into a bathroom around the turn of the century. The conversion of this room into a bathroom enabled the addition of a built in closet in the master bedroom, a rare feature in a home of this age. Another closet was built into the space at the end

of the upstairs hallway.

As mentioned above, the large room over the carriage shed arches was a space for housing migrant workers in the mills. It is now used for storage. The rooms above the kitchen housed the cook and servants. This space is now used as a guest room.

The current owners have done a lot of updates but have kept the heritage qualities of the home fully intact. All of the trim and paint in the home is in beautiful condition, with colours that are extremely appropriate to the history of the home. (see images). The Attleys have refinished all the floors, removing the faded and chipping paint and sanding and staining the pine. The effect is beautiful and reveals the character of the home (see Dining-Room-Floor.jpg). They have redone the kitchen including cabinets and appliances (it had already been redone once) in keeping with the heritage style of the home. They have also added a new floating vinyl floor in the kitchen. They replaced a wood burning stove in the parlour with a propane stove. The only *major* changes to the home that they have done is to make a single large room from three smaller rooms on the second floor above the kitchen (see Above-Kitchen.jpg), adding a full modern bathroom there as well. They also removed cable supports in the upper story above the carriage arches and replaced them with wooden girders to improve the function of the space as storage space (see Above-Carriage-Shed.jpg and Above-Carriage-Shed2.jpg). They redid the backyard landscaping when a new septic system was put in but managed to preserve some of the old honeysuckle bushes (see Back-Yard.jpg) They have added a small garden shed at the back of the home.

Some other standard upgrades are as follows: the chimneys have been relined with isokern liners for safety. The wiring has been redone with 200amp service. All of the plumbing is new. There is a water softener. The home is heated by a propane stove in the parlour and a gas furnace.

#### **Notes:**

From [www.teskey.org](http://www.teskey.org):

Stephen Harper's wife is Laureen 1963 Teskey. Laureen is a descendant of pioneer William 1787 Teskey. William came from Rathkeale, Ireland and settled in Camden East township, Ontario, in the 1840s. He, like most Teskeys, was descended from Jacob 1659 Teskey who migrated from the German Pfalz to Ireland in 1709.

From [heritagecanada.org](http://heritagecanada.org), awards recipients 2008:

Julian Smith, M.Arch, OAA, Ottawa, Ontario

Scholar, educator, architect and humanist, Julian Smith has, for more than 30 years, been a leader in efforts to ensure the conservation of Canada's historic places.

As Chief Conservation Architect, National Historic Sites Program at Parks Canada from 1980 to 1987, he coordinated all national historic site design and development projects, and provided conservation advice to federal government departments and agencies. He also advised on the design and implementation of the Federal Heritage Buildings Program, which has led to the designation of 1,300 federal government buildings across the country.

Julian Smith's contribution to Canada's conservation field has been enriched by the research and knowledge he acquired through his parallel careers as university professor and practicing architect. In 1989, he established one of the first graduate programs in heritage conservation in Canada, at Carleton University in Ottawa, where he served as Director for 17 years. In this role, he became a mentor to

many working in the conservation field today.

As the principal of Julian Smith & Associates, Architects, he has established a national and international reputation for his work in the conservation, restoration and adaptive reuse of historic properties. He is noted for his sensitive designs for contemporary insertions in historic settings, and for the development of master plans, urban design studies and heritage district plans for significant urban and rural places. Noted projects in which he has played a leading role include:

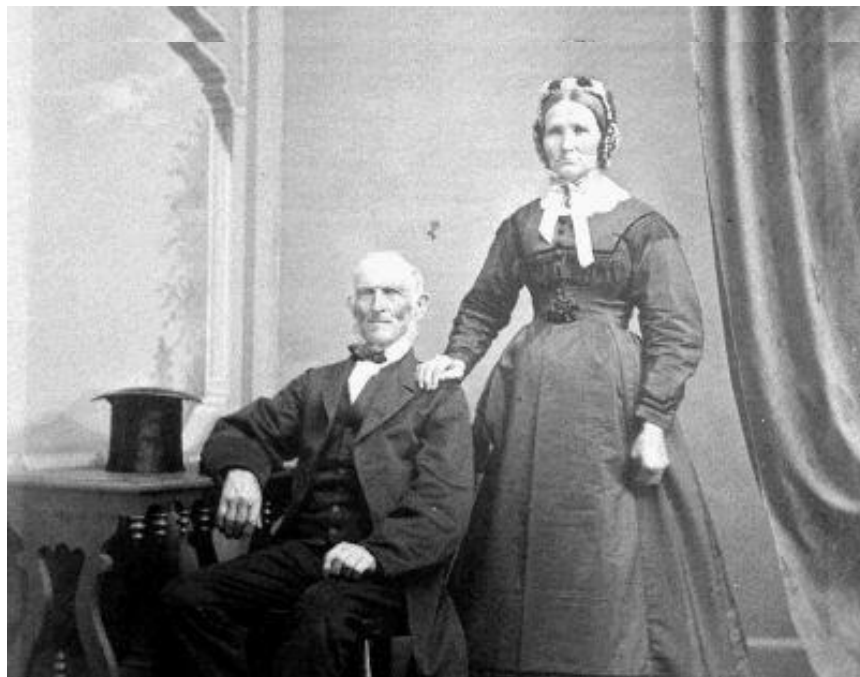
- \* the restoration of the Vimy Memorial in France;
- \* the development of master plans for the Ontario Parliament Buildings and Grounds at Queen's Park in Toronto;
- \* the landscapes of Parliament Hill and Rideau Hall in Ottawa;
- \* the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa;
- \* The Aberdeen Pavillion National Historic Site in Ottawa; and
- \* the new Canadian Embassy in the historic Villa Graziloli in Rome.

Julian Smith is a member of the board of directors of ICOMOS Canada; coauthored the Appleton Charter, and contributed to the FHBRO Code of Practice and the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada. He was recently invited to advise UNESCO on the drafting of a new international convention on the protection of historic urban landscapes. In keeping with a life-long interest in uniting conservation philosophy with restoration skills, Mr. Smith recently accepted the position of Executive Director of the Willowbank School of Restoration Arts in Queenston, Ontario. Julian Smith was nominated by Marc L. Monette, Director, Project Implementation Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

**Images:**

Please see the attached image files of the modern Stoneacre home as referred to in this document.

**Additional Historical Images:**



John Adam Teskey 1837 - 1908 and Sarah (Giles) 1833 - 1909. John inherited Appleton Woollen Mill, Ontario



Albert Teskey 1870 – 1950

**Sources:**

[www.teskey.org](http://www.teskey.org) accessed June 2009

Conversation with Lynn Attley June 2, 2009. (Linda Hamilton)

[www.heritagecanada.org](http://www.heritagecanada.org) accessed June 2009

Brown, Jack Historical Sketches of Appleton. Riverside Press, Mallorytown, 1973

Susan Campbell. Ramsay Reflections 1836-1979

Almonte Registry Office

**Additional Resources Recommended for More Information:**

The North Lanark Regional Museum (Appleton Museum), 647 River Road, Appleton, Ontario, Canada has lots of information on the Teskey family. For opening hours, please call the museum on (613)257-8503.

Sandy Atack, Almonte, Ontario. 613 256 0219

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