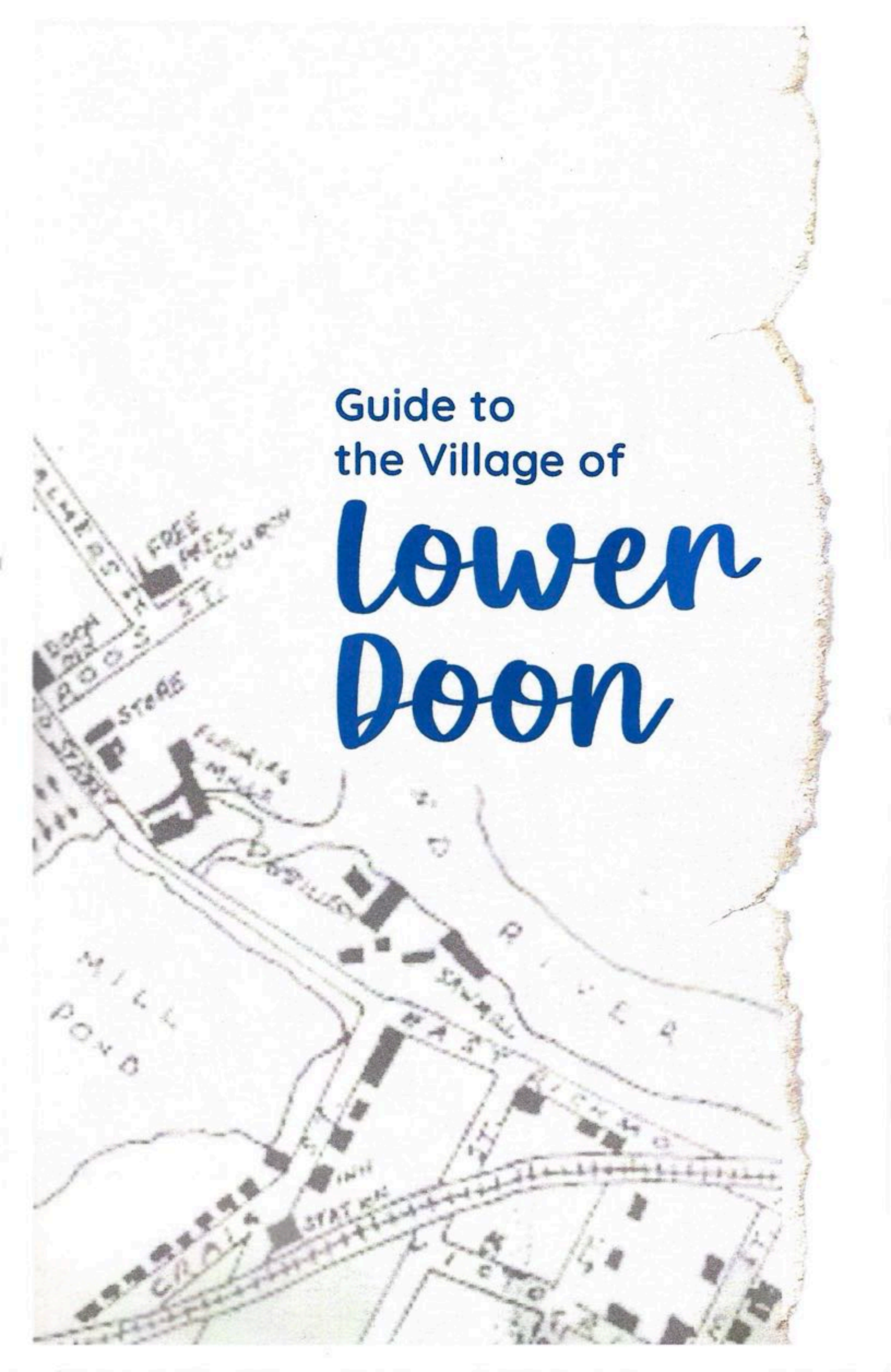
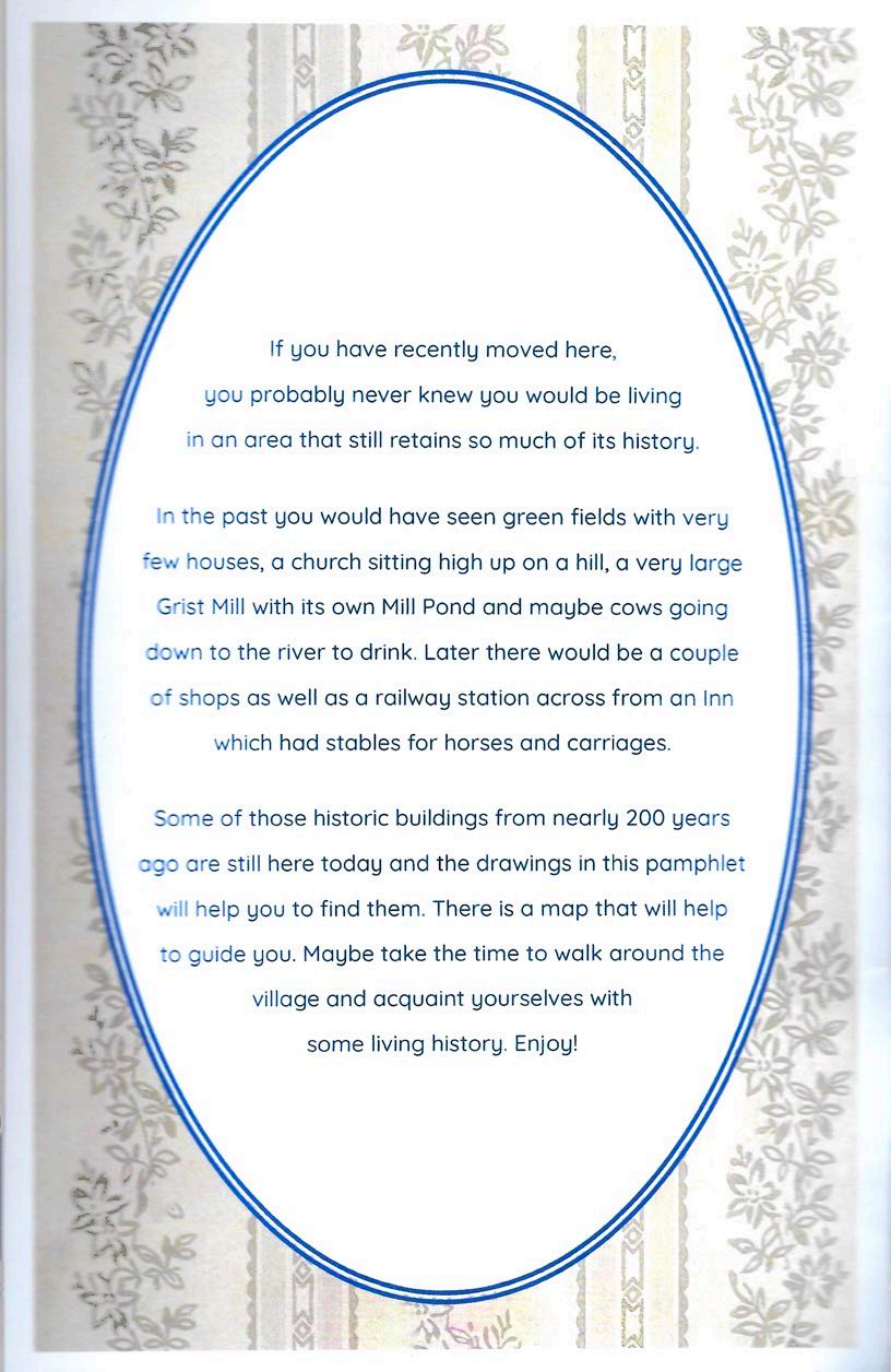




Guide to
the Village of

Lower Doon

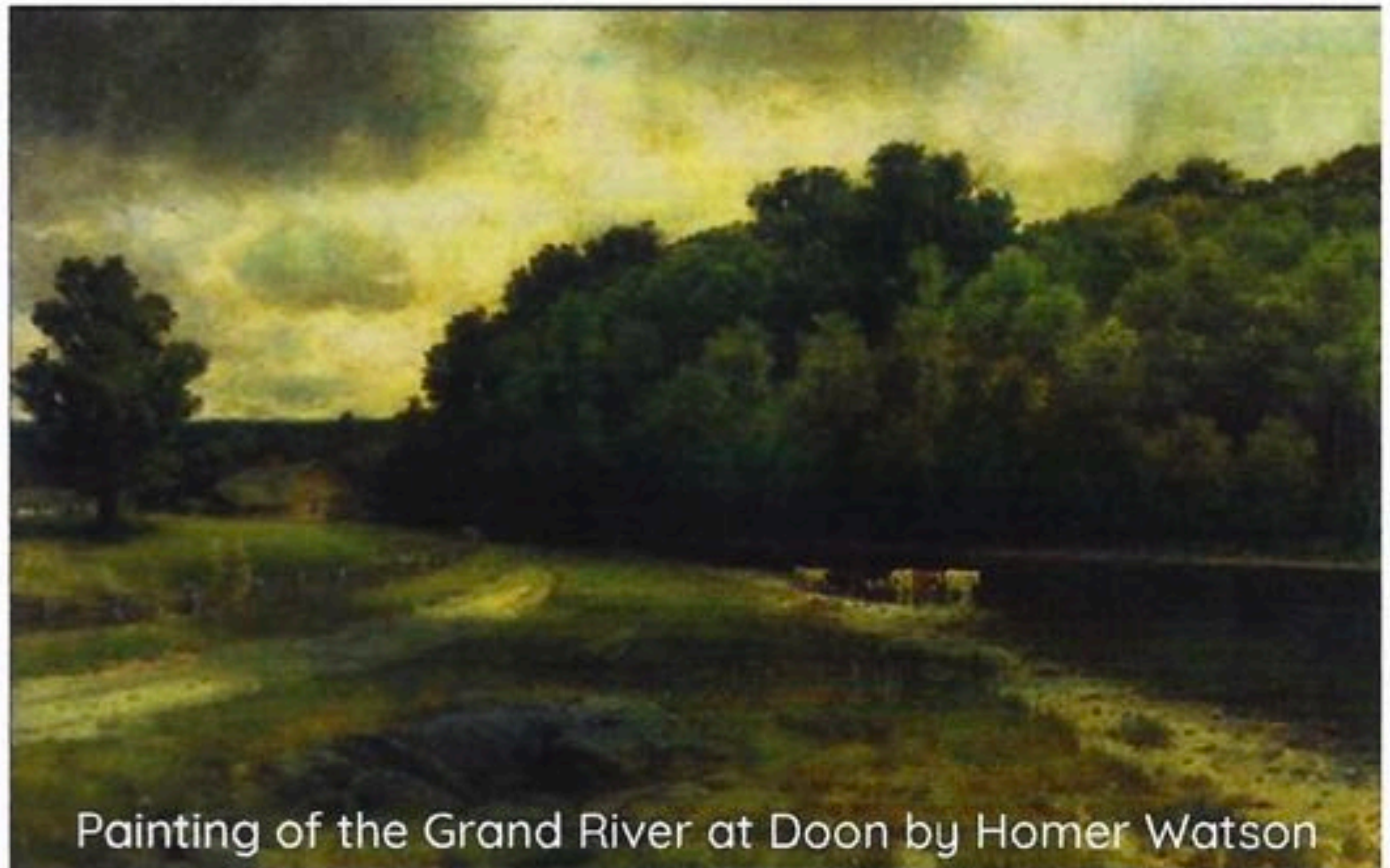


If you have recently moved here,
you probably never knew you would be living
in an area that still retains so much of its history.

In the past you would have seen green fields with very
few houses, a church sitting high up on a hill, a very large
Grist Mill with its own Mill Pond and maybe cows going
down to the river to drink. Later there would be a couple
of shops as well as a railway station across from an Inn
which had stables for horses and carriages.

Some of those historic buildings from nearly 200 years
ago are still here today and the drawings in this pamphlet
will help you to find them. There is a map that will help
to guide you. Maybe take the time to walk around the
village and acquaint yourselves with
some living history. Enjoy!

HERITAGE HOMES AND PLACES



1. Homer Watson House
2. Doon Presbyterian Church
3. Doon Mills Ruins
4. Pioneer Tower
5. Willow Lake Park
6. Regency Cottage, 20 Pinnacle
7. Red Lion Inn, 37 Pinnacle
8. Farm House, 39 Doon Valley
9. William Allen House, 20 Durham
10. Cordwainer's Cottage, 1755 Old Mill Road

1. Homer Watson House, built 1834



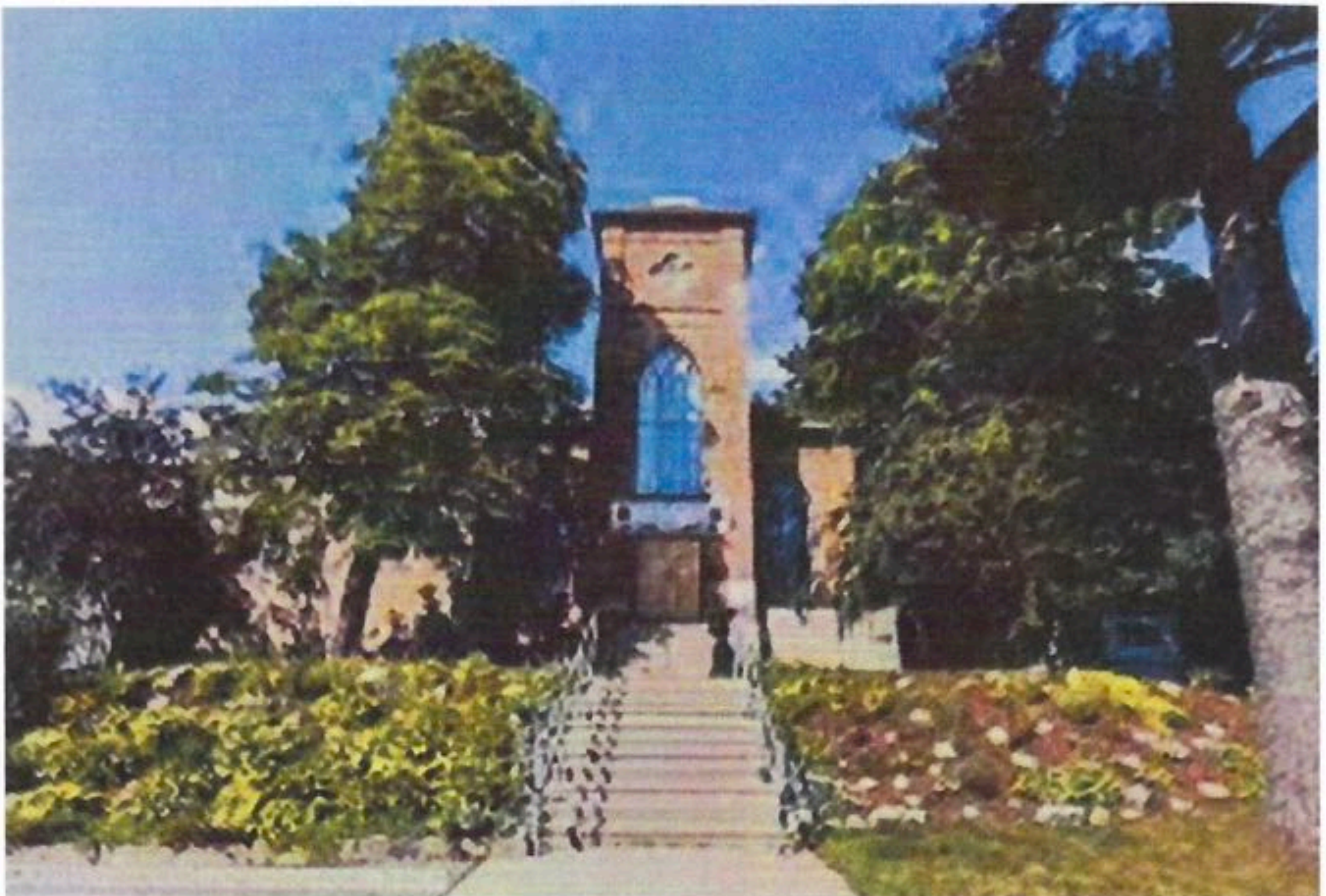
This is the oldest art Gallery in Canada. Originally it was the house of the famous Canadian artist Homer Ransford Watson who died in 1936. He and his wife Roxana and their daughter, Mary, lived here. People came here to buy Homer Watson's paintings which he displayed in his Gallery. Homer gained fame when his painting Pioneer Mill was purchased for Queen Victoria. She later acquired another of his, Last of the Drought. Both paintings were in the private collection of HM Queen Elizabeth II. Today, other artists display their work in this house.

Can you find the animal footprint in the brick wall outside next to the front door? Go inside the house and find the tiny air bubbles in the window glass which shows the glass is very old. Look at the fireplaces that used to burn coal & wood to heat the house. Be sure to visit Watson's studio where you will see his easel and paint brushes. He built his Studio facing north so the light would be right for him to paint by.



2. Doon Presbyterian Church, built 1853

Designed and built by the Carpenter Xavier Pfeiffer at a cost of \$4,912 it was situated high on a hill with a majestic view of the river and stood well above the treeless rolling hills of Doon. The Hon. Adam Ferrie donated the land on which the church and its cemetery still stands today.



In 1853 you had to pay for your pew - \$2.50 annually for a single pew and \$10 for a family, all of which helped to pay the Minister's wages, defray the cost of building the church and maintain it. A Minister would be expected to provide ministry for maybe two Churches. The congregation would take care of the church and took turns to provide firewood and kindling for the two wood burning stoves that kept the church warm in the winter months.

The village of Doon was populated by immigrants of Scottish and English descent who had settled here. The first Minister to establish the congregation was the Rev. John Bayne who led the Free Church of Scotland movement in Upper Canada.

By 1976 many people had moved away from the village and as church membership had declined to just 12 families, and the church was badly in need of repair, there was discussion about tearing it down; however, because the city was considering a new housing development here it was felt this would increase membership and that new community did come to its rescue. A new section to the church was built bringing it up to present-day standards.

The City gave the church a heritage designation in 2026 due to its many original historic features and the artifacts it contains.

The Church's mission was, and still is to foster a community where everyone can experience the love and grace of God. Services and Sunday school is held every Sunday at 10:00 a.m., followed

by refreshments in the Fellowship Hall at 11:00 a.m.

Finally, it is a church that likes to sing and it has a very friendly reputation.



3. Doon Mills



If you look over the bridge on Old Mill Road facing the river, you will see down below some stone ruins. On this spot there was once a Grist Mill soaring five stories high built in 1839 by Adam Ferrie who, with his family, came from Scotland. The family established several businesses in what is now Lower Doon including a distillery, tavern, general store, saw mill, cooperage, blacksmith shop and kiln. They also built workers' houses.

Adam Ferrie Jr. gave Doon its name after Loch Doon in Ayrshire, Scotland. From this time most of the settlers were artisans, millers and brick makers of Scottish and English background.

Doon Mills, driven by water, was fully operational in 1839, grinding oatmeal, flour, and barley for the local population. The population of Doon both in 1855 and 1869 was 200.

Across the street is Willow Lake Park but if you look at the 1861 map you will see that it was once the Mill Pond which provided the water for this Mill.

When this mill burned down Jacob Cluthe bought the land and in 1890 built a new Shoddy Mill which had a machine that took old discarded clothes and rags and tore them into tiny fibres which were spun into new cloth. It was a very rough, coarse cloth. The word Shoddy means of poor quality.

This mill also burnt down and was never rebuilt. All you see today are the crumbling remains. It is a good place for taking photos, or maybe you could follow the path down to the river.

4. Pioneer Tower, built 1925 • Old Mill Road



With a big thank you to the City of Kitchener and the Heritage Department (2025) for installing a beautiful seated area to take in the view of the Tower across the Grand River.

This Tower was built to honour the first Mennonite Settlers, Joseph Schoerg and Samuel Betzner who came to Waterloo County in 1800 - others later followed. They travelled here in Conestoga Wagons from Pennsylvania, USA. What a long way these families travelled with their children and possessions all piled into small wagons. The wagon was similar to a huge boat with four wheels. The canvas covering was called a Bonnet because it was shaped like the bonnets that women wore in those days.

The floor of the wagon was sealed tight so it could float and not sink if it had to cross a river, keeping their possessions dry. You can see an original Conestoga wagon at the Doon Heritage Crossroads Museum.

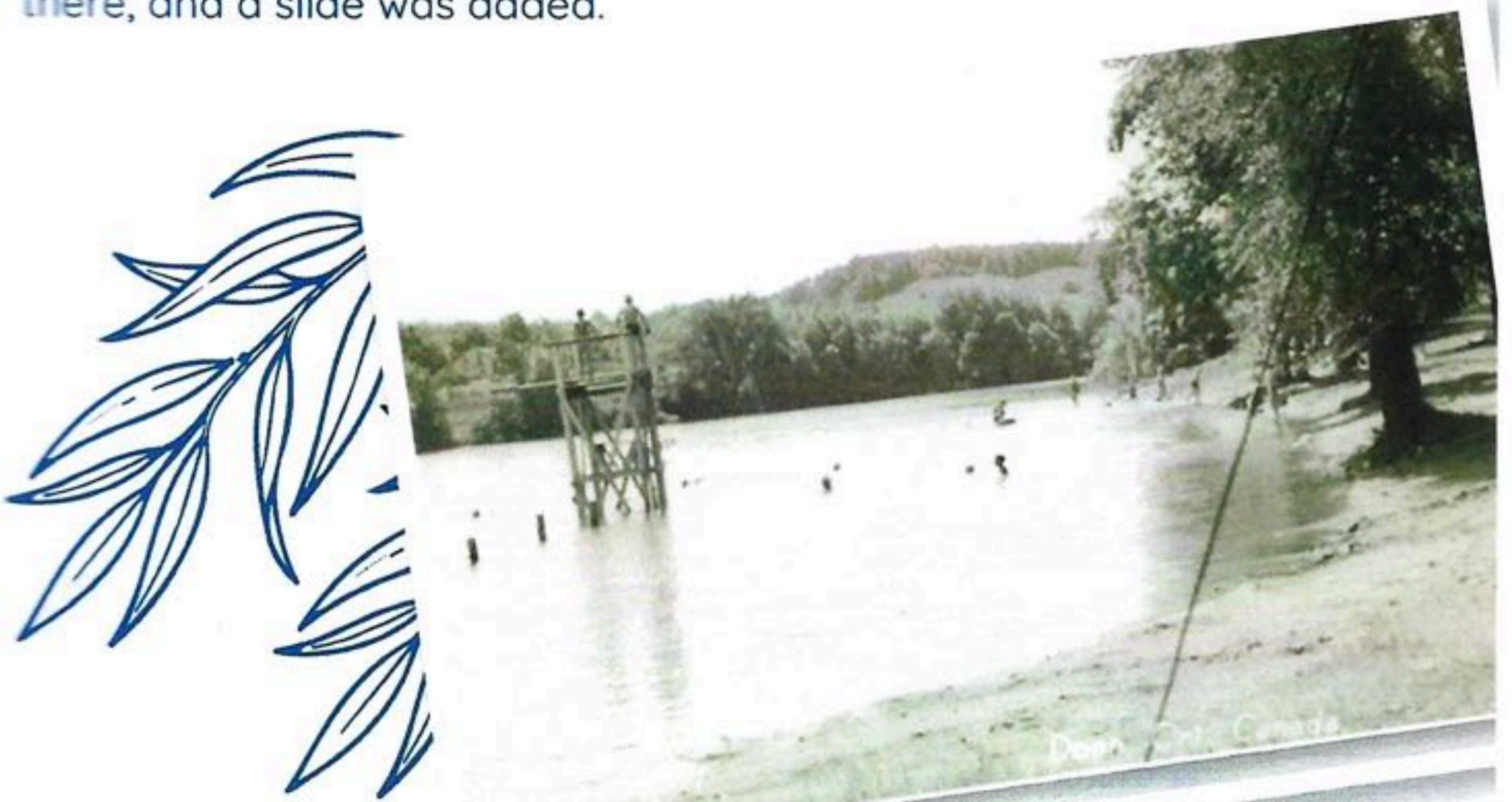
The Tower's roof is made of copper and the wind vane at the very top is in the shape of a Conestoga wagon. It is well worth a visit to the Tower. From the top parapet it has a commanding view of the area.

5. Willow Lake • 1950's Post card

This park was once a Mill Pond that created the mechanical power to run the former Doon Mill. When the Mill was no longer in use, but still owned by the Cluthe family, the Pond became a lake where people came to swim and picnic. Through the 1920's and 30's it was a popular spot for people to spend a Sunday afternoon swimming, canoeing and relaxing in the shade of the Willow trees which, at that time, surrounded the lake. Grandma Cluthe was the person who named it Willow Lake.

Later in the 1950's you would find hot dog and chip stands here and small log cabins for rent where people could stay for a holiday. John Weaver was the lifeguard and lived on Pinnacle (his small cottage is still there) and he could walk to the bottom of his garden and swim over to the wooden stand you see in the picture below, or canoe over.

In August of 1968 a rain storm dropped 5 inches in one hour flooding the lake and causing it to overflow. In the flood of water a picnic table got caught up in the flow and was trapped in the dam so it couldn't close and the lake completely emptied out. It was then a dry bed of land until 1998 when a neighbourhood petition to Kitchener City Council had it officially named Willow Lake Park at which time some new children's swings were installed to replace the old one there, and a slide was added.

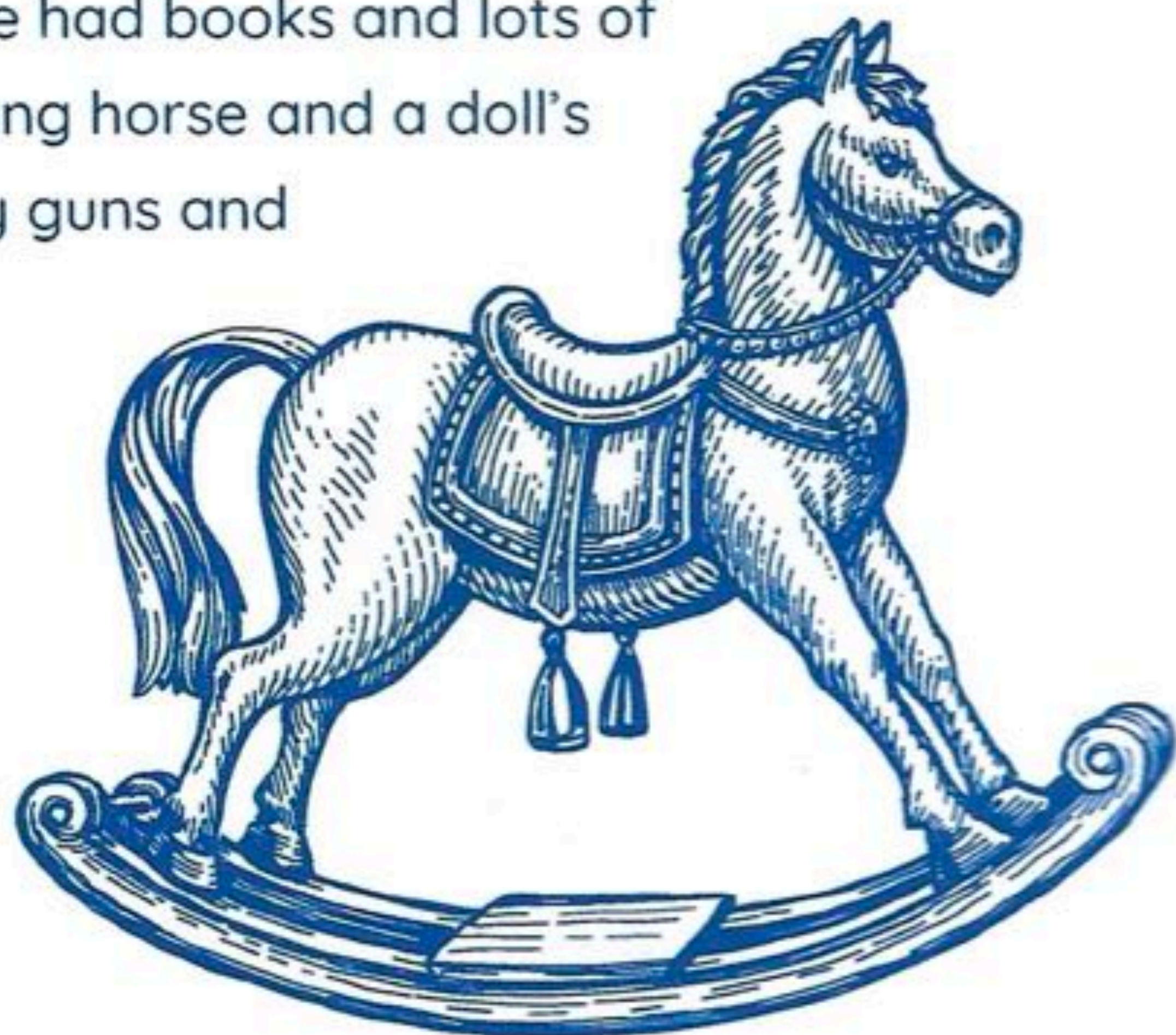


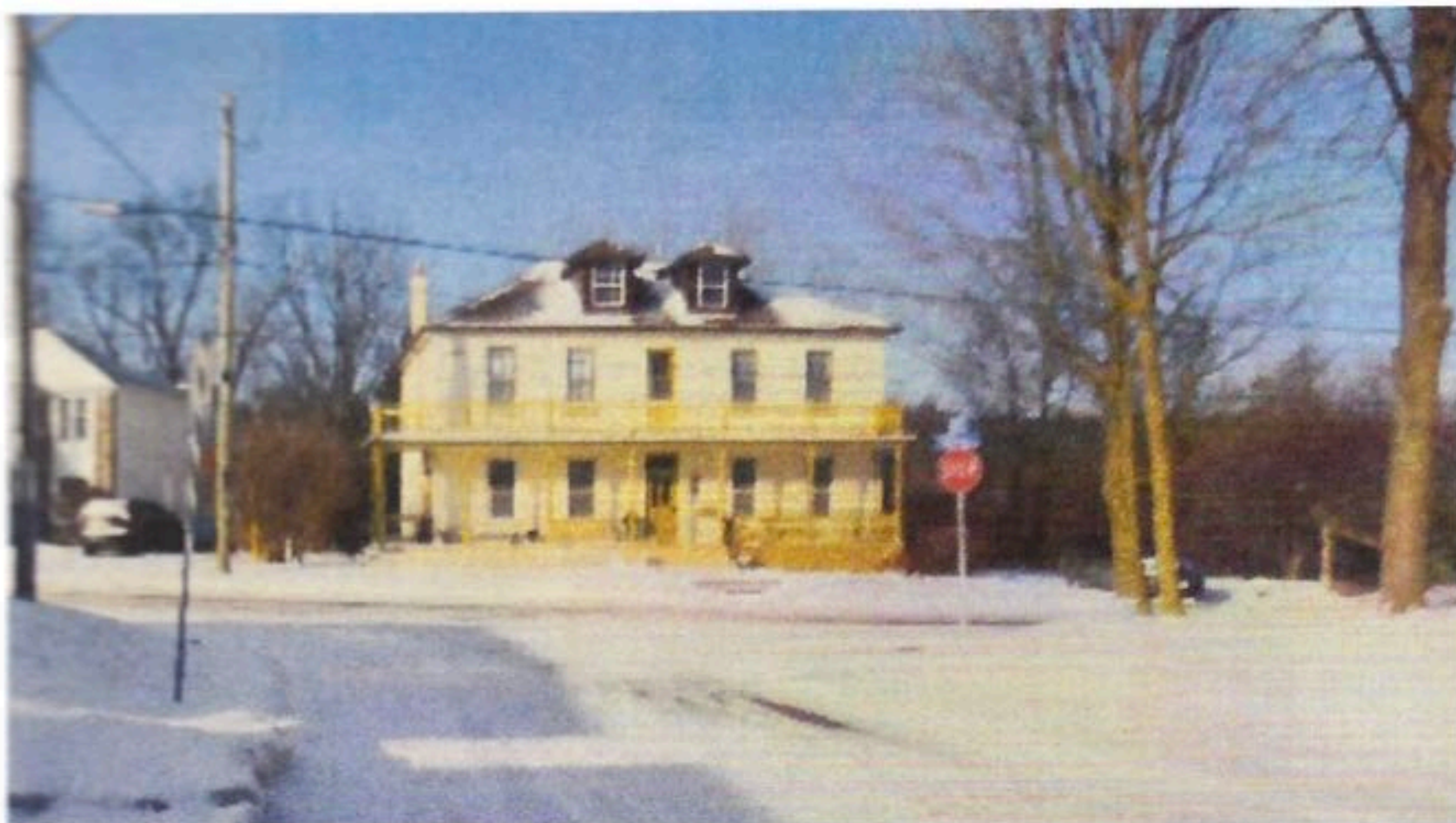
6. Regency Cottage, 1858 • 20 Pinnacle



Pinnacle was once called Craig Street - see map of 1861. In 1858 Xaviour Pffeifer, a local carpenter, built this Regency styled cottage. In 1853 he had designed and built the Doon Presbyter-

rian Church on Roos Street at a cost of \$4,912. The land was gifted by Adam Ferrie, a mill owner who came from Scotland and who later became a Provincial Minister. The style of this cottage was very fashionable but copied from houses that were built in big cities, not in small villages. The person who owned this would have had more money than most people living here. Look at the style of windows on the front of the house - they are called casement windows which meant they were set far back into the wall of the house. The three pieces of glass in the front of the door are called trilights - tri means three. The verandah and railing have been rebuilt. Children living in these kinds of homes would have had books and lots of toys to play with, such as a rocking horse and a doll's house and maybe a fort with toy guns and soldiers made out of lead. They may also have had toy farms with all the animals because their toys would be copies of the life lived around them. No radios, televisions, cell phones or video games to play with to pass away the time!



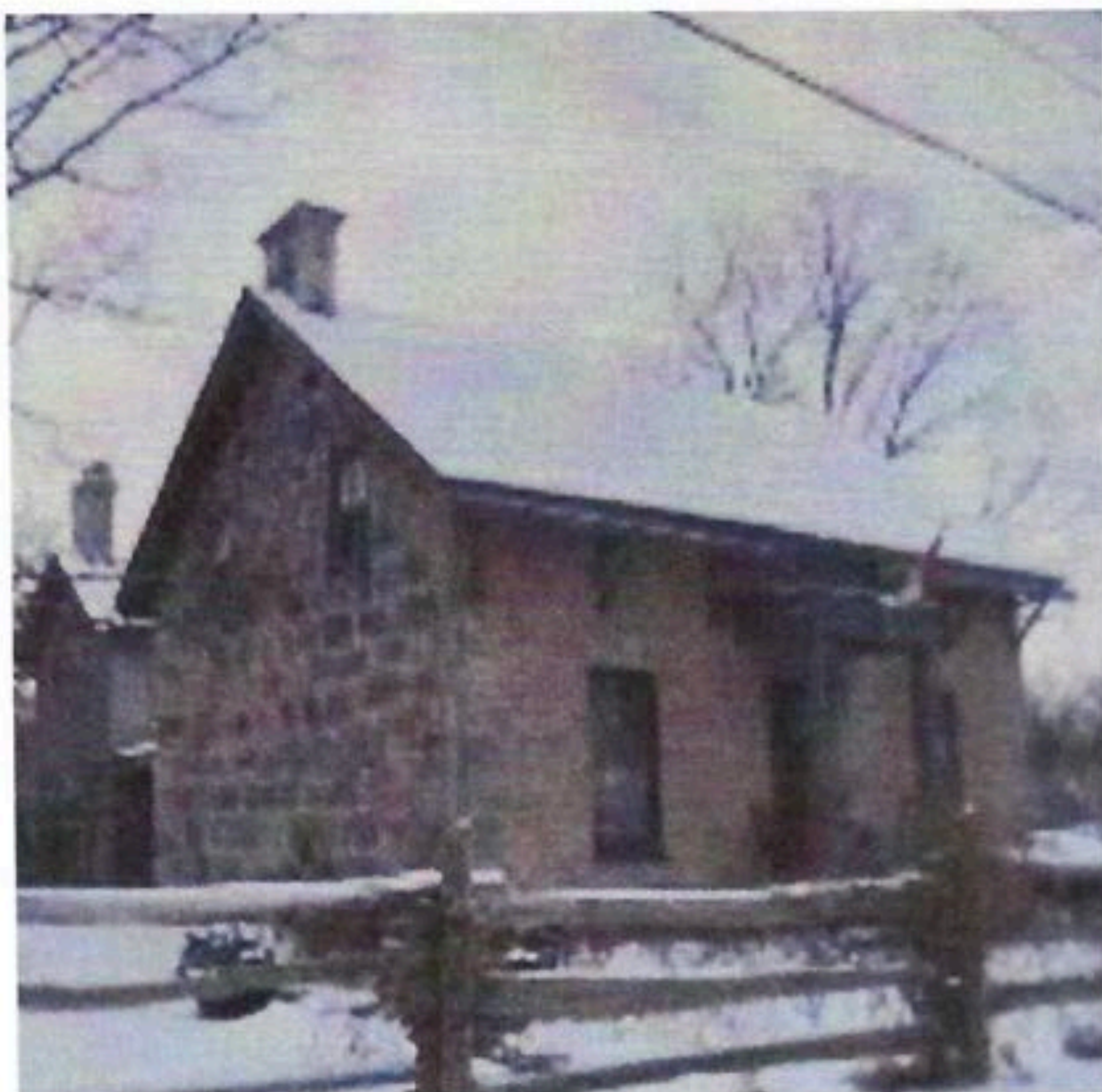


7. Red Lion Inn, 1892 • 37 Pinnacle Road

There was once a railway station at the bottom of Victoria Street (now Amherst) very close to this Inn. People would stay here when they visited Kitchener which was then a very small town called Berlin. The Inn had seven bedrooms for guests and stables for six horses and carriages. At the back of the Inn was the Mill Pond for the Grist Mill, now Willow Lake park. In those days people travelled great distances by horse and carriage and later trains. The people who live here have turned the Inn into a beautiful house. Now, use your imagination and try and see it as an Inn with lots of people arriving and leaving. Watch out! Here comes a horse and carriage driving up Craig Street with guests for the Inn and, across the street, people are disembarking from the train with ladies and men wearing the latest fashions. If you look at the 1861 map you will see on the corner of Roos Street there was an Inn there too and there was even a third - at the end of Mill Park Road, just before you turn onto Huron, where now a square of stones show its footprint. What a busy place Doon was!

8. 39 Doon Valley Road, 1840 • once Huron Road

This house was built by Adam Ferrie Jr., just in front of where the Cooperage was. The house is interesting in that it was built using three methods of construction. At the back and west side, field stones were used – the cheapest form of building material – on the frontage there was limestone but cut or scored to look like good stone – and the side (which would have faced the public on Huron Road) was cut in granite stone. During that time it wasn't unusual to have the houses built with the best side of stone facing front. Huron Road was the main road for horse drawn carriages driving all the way from Hamilton to Goderich. (See the footprint at 14 Mill Park Drive where there was an Inn servicing the road – it has a historical plaque telling that story). There have been 4 owners here since 1870 but it has been rented out to so many people. It is presently owned by the Thomas family. Deer have often camped down for the night in its backyard and some of you may remember when in the 1970/80's horses would walk underneath a bridge crossing Homer Watson Blvd., going up on Pinnacle Hill to graze. They belonged to the people renting the house at that time.



The Ferrie Cooperage (see 1861 map) was built approx., 1840 which made the wooden staves that form the sides of a barrel – then the metal hoops go around the barrel – and some staves were found here when this area underwent an archaeological dig in 2004. According to an 1871

Census the Cooperage was operated by the widow Elizabeth Beamer who employed 3 men at a total wage of \$400 and which also recorded making 50,000 staves and hoops and 850 barrels. They used to roll the finished barrels down the hill (Craig Street) to the distillery that was situated on the river. As you can see, today it has been bulldozed over to make way for a new townhouse development.

9. William Allen House (Aka Kinzie House) 1860 • 20 Durham Street



This house is known locally as the Kinzie House because of that family who used to live here. It was built by William Allen in 1860 when he was 57 (1803-1879) who bought this and 3 other lots from Adam Ferrie for \$72. Mr. Allen also owned a shop in the village of Doon which sold dry goods, meat and produce. Doon had a population of about 452 at that time. The steeply pitched gable roof provides good second-storey space although it is only 1 ½ storey high but was built this way to avoid paying taxes on a 2-storey home. When this house was built you would have been able to see all of the Grand River and surrounding village from the bedroom windows.



The house was surrounded by an Orchard which is where Orchard Mill Crescent (behind the house) gets its name. Some of the trees from that orchard are still alive today and can be seen in the back yards of the new houses surrounding the farm house. There were apple, pear and lots of walnut trees.

The glass panels on either side of the front door are called sidelights, and the wood above the door is called dog tooth ornamentation.

Today, people who live behind this house sometimes dig things up in their back yards that was once the rubbish from this farm because back in the 1800's there wasn't any garbage collection and you either burned or buried your refuse in big holes in the garden.

10. Cordwainer's Cottage, built 1873

1755 Old Mill Road



The Doon Map of 1861 shows that the bridge over Schneider Creek split Old Mill Road into East and West. This cottage was in West Richmond Street. It was later named Wilson Avenue and went all the way through (what is now) Mill Park Drive alongside the woods and right through the section of woods now closed to Fairview Mall. When the surrounding new housing estate was built it was re-named Old Mill Road. The original front of this 1873 Georgian-styled cottage can no longer be seen but if you go around to the side you will see the brick from the original cottage. This house was



very typical of a workman's cottage. The frontage was built much later (maybe 1930's). The cottage was first owned by John Beyer, then sold 3 years later in 1876 to John Firestone who was a shoemaker from Galt before he moved here and the house was known as the Cordwainer's Cottage. The word cordwainer comes from the Spanish

"corwain" meaning leather or goat skin which was ready dressed and tanned and largely manufactured in Spain in the 1800's and from which shoes and other leather goods were made. In 1924 the house was bought by Jacob Cluthe who owned the Doon Mill and later, his descendants who owned the Willow Lake Resort. Jacob's descendants still live in Lower Doon.





Spring Trilliums in Homer Watson Woods

Drawings and history courtesy of
City of Kitchener Local Architectural Conservation

Advisory Committee:
**A guide to the Historical and Architectural Heritage
of The Doon Area Kitchener (out of print)**

Text & photos compiled by
Louisa Stephenson, 2026