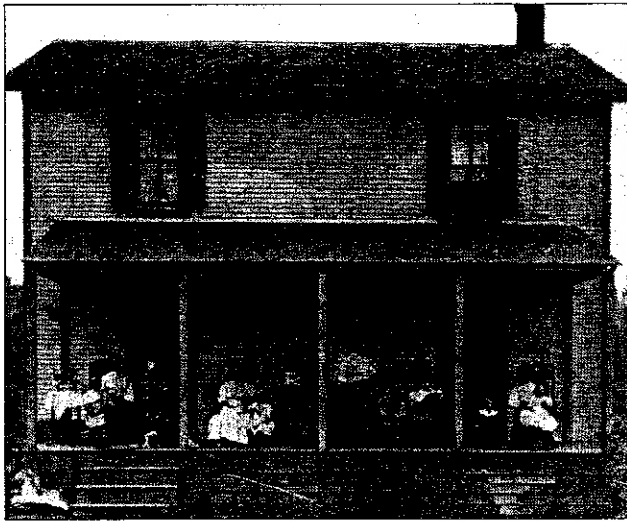


The Way We Were



Bamberger house in 1909. Source: *West Hamilton, a Village and a Church*, by David Jardine, photo courtesy Ann Young Hunter

LOREEN JEROME

This is the story of a house built in our community. It is the oldest surviving house from Hamilton and might be described as the cornerstone of West Hamilton's history.

I can picture Samuel Bamberger sitting on the front porch of this tiny log house, which stood alone on a small hill in a partial clearing in the wilderness, with a little creek meandering down the escarpment and across the plain just below the house.

Samuel Bamberger came to Canada from his native Pennsylvania with the Hess family in 1804. He purchased 100 acres of land from John Binkley in 1806 for £125. The land was located in what is now West Hamilton.

Around 1815 he built a two-story, hand-hewn, squared-timber house using the white pine available on the property, at a time when Upper Canada was a struggling colony. The logs were squared with an adze and joined by wooden pegs. The house measured just 27½ feet wide by 22 feet deep, with a low-pitched gable roof shingled with hand-split pine shakes. Board and batten covered the outside, and the chinks were filled with limestone from Hamilton's escarpment.

The Bamberger family farmed the land until 1907, when it was sold to the Burke Realty Company. In 1909 the house was moved to numbers 11 and 13 Holmes

Hamilton's Oldest House

Street and placed on a cement foundation. The move was necessary to accommodate the extension of what is now Emerson Street. At this time many physical changes were made. The centre door was blocked off, and the two lower front windows were made into separate

entrances to convert the building into a duplex. Inside, a stairway was built at the centre back of the house for access to the second floor. Over the years the original clapboard siding had grey stucco applied, and later this was covered with aluminum siding. The large front veranda eventually was screened in, with separate entrances for the duplex.

In 1992, the owner applied for a demolition permit. The West Hamilton Heritage Society spoke out. After extensive research, Nina Chapple, architectural historian of Hamilton, and carpenter Jim Stroud examined the house. In July 1993, following consultation with Peter J.

Stokes, an authority on early Canadian architecture, the house was cut in half and loaded on two flatbeds and trucked off to Westfield Heritage Village in Rockton, Ontario, at a cost of \$15,000.

External restoration, almost-completed,

will soon bring the house back to its original appearance. I urge you to visit Westfield and see what life was like back then.

I would like to thank Peter Lloyd, of Westfield Heritage Village and a McMaster graduate, who is in charge of the restoration, for graciously giving me a tour of Bamberger House and allowing me access to their library. Volunteers are needed for further restoration, and all donations are welcome. Peter is trying to locate 1850 period furniture to refurbish the inside when completed. Call 1-888-319-4722, e-mail west@nonline.net, or visit: <http://www.westfieldheritage.ca>.



The house in its present state of restoration at Westfield Heritage Village.

Photo: Loreen Jerome