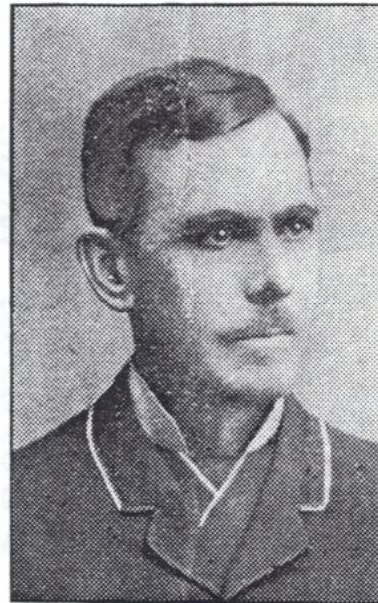


The History of Hughson Hall

John Sharman was one of Stratford's earliest pioneers emigrating from Bedfordshire, England in 1834 at which time the population of Stratford was thirty-nine. He soon became crown agent and surveyor for the Canada Company and opened the first blacksmith shop in the village. He also built a hotel and purchased several lots and choice farm land north of Hibernia Street and East of Huntingdon Avenue which is now part of the local Agricultural Fairgrounds

John's son Joseph Sharman was born August 10, 1841 and he was considered to be the first white child to be born in Stratford. John's wife was a schoolteacher and church organist. She died shortly after Joseph was born and she was the first person to be buried in what is known as God's Acre next to St. James Anglican Church at the end of Hibernia Street although the exact location of her grave has been lost. In 1863 Joseph began business as an Iron Founder and Manufacturer of Agricultural implements including the well known Sharman Threshing Machine.

In 1873 he bought a 75-acre farm from his brother Robert for \$4500.00 and in 1875 he built what is now known as Hughson Hal for \$4000.00. This home was considered to be one of Stratford's finest homes and was described as a white triple-brick Italianate house. Joseph was 34 at the time and with wife Isabella (nee Logan) they already had seven children. The assessments also note the presence of 1 dog, 4 horses, 2 cows and 4 pigs on the farm. Joseph became a successful cattle breeder, and around 1880 he gave up manufacturing and moved to Manitoba with his eleven children where he died in 1922 of pneumonia.





The architectural design for the house can be attributed to Alexander Hepburn who specialized in Victorian Italianate houses. The house was built under the guidelines of "Picturesque Theory" In this field of thought a house should blend into the natural landscape, it should feature irregular or rugged outlines and should look or be old and finally there should be an element of deception or surprise. Hepburn also designed the Windsor Hotel now known as the Ponderosa or Douglas estate, and the Huron Street Bridge, which is one of Ontario's few surviving stone bridges. His son Thomas also became an architect and built the local Library and Archives building.

1885 - Stratford becomes a city, July 22

1887 Reverend Ebenezer W. Paton clergyman becomes a tenant in the house which is now located on a 3 ¼ acre lot

Electricity comes to Stratford

1894 House sold to Alice and Henry Buckle, nurseryman of Toronto and the lease the house to a local dentist by the name of W.R. Hamilton

1899 Sold to James Fleming

John Morris, also a blacksmith and carriage maker moved into the house in 1901. He purchased the home for \$3500. Mr. Morris's daughter Hope married Rev. William Spence in the library, which is now the owners Den. The young couple moved to a rural parish in Iowa.



Years later their son Hartzell Spence chronicled "the life of a particular parson" in his 1940's best seller, One Foot in Heaven.

Warner Brothers of Hollywood bought the rights to the book, and brought their cameras to Stratford and filmed the opening scenes featuring our grand staircase and the library. The movie starred Frederick March and Martha Scott and was nominated for best picture in 1941. Turner Enterprises as a part of their pre 1949 package eventually bought the film.





Leading man from
"One Foot in Heaven"

Frederick March



1906 Charles and Frances Davies Acquire property

In 1907 the Grandson of the original Architect who built the house became the new owners. William Hepburn who was a tax collector by profession and who was also the mayor of Stratford in 1904 along with his wife Sabina buy the property which has by this time decreased to only ½ an acre in size.



WILLIAM HEPBURN

Later the Hepburn's lease the home to John H Gordon who was the owner of a clothing business

1916 George McPherson, barrister, buys the property from the widow Sabina Hepburn

1918 - First swans were given to the city by a Michigan CNR employee

1919 Leslie and Arthur Dodds, accountant, assume ownership and tenancy in 1919. Mr. Dodds was an Accountant and he and his wife had three daughters. After each of them was born Mr. Dodds planted a maple tree in their honor. The trees grew to over 30 meters tall. Two of these trees still survive on the west side of the front lawn unfortunately the third fell victim to a storm in the fall of 2007.

1935 - Shakespearean Gardens open

1945 James and Sarah Coombs, owners

In 1951 Harry and Phyllis Watson owned the house and this is when the home began an ever-growing tie with the Shakespeare festival. Tom Patterson was one of the festival's founders and Harry and Phyllis were his brother-in-law and Sister.

On another interesting note it was around this time that a young Christopher Plummer made his Stratford debut. While he was performing in Stratford he rented the downstairs apartment.



“Henry V” Christopher Plummer grabbed for the title role in Shakespeare’s historical play stands here before the tent at Stratford, Ont.



1953 - Stratford Festival opens in a tent, founded by Stratford journalist, Tom Patterson.

1957 - Stratford Festival moves into a new permanent structure.

On Stage – Christopher Plummer as Henry V woos Ginette Letondal as the French Princess Katherine. Stratford Festival Ran only five weeks in 1953, will last nine this summer

1963 Anne Miller

1966 Donald and Florence Patterson took over the house in 1966 returning the home into the Patterson family. Donald was Tom Patterson's brother.

1969 William Byers a prominent local lawyer and his wife Patricia purchased the home in 1969. They did extensive renovations to the home expanding the kitchen and adding on the back solarium.

Rev. Dr. Eugene Bannerman and his wife Iris purchased the home in 1984. Iris had strong ties with the festival as well being an actress herself she performed with the festival and later took on the position of Voice Coach for the company. She is also purported to have worked as a body double for Elizabeth Taylor. Iris obtained her Ph. D. from the University of Toronto in 1995 and went on to become the Director of the Acting Program at Ryerson Theatre School, and wrote the highly acclaimed curriculum for the four

year Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree. Her biography is included in Canadian Who's Who. Since leaving Ryerson University, Dr. Bannerman has conducted workshops at Vancouver's Lyric Theatre

In 1984 the house received a LACAC Bi-Centennial Plaque from the City of Stratford. The house was also featured on the cover of City and Country Home in May 1986 in their Salute to Stratford.

2004 Marie Starr Whyte

2008 Ross Hodgson and Clinton Hughes purchased the home in April of this year. Moving across the country from Calgary Alberta to start a new life in Stratford. Ross has a long history in the Arts and most recently taught Drama and Musical Theatre at the Performing Arts School in Calgary. Clinton is an Interior Designer by trade but also has a theatrical background having toured internationally as a professional figure skater and studying dance at the University of Calgary. Both are happy to now call Stratford home and are excited about the adventures that await them both.