

Pioneer Guénette farmhouse preserved



The first honour for *Conserving local heritage buildings* went to Andrée Gauthier and Dirk Schmeckel in 2016. The couple was recognized for their work in preserving the pioneer character of their home on rue Jonathan. It was originally the Guénette farmhouse, located on Rang 2, lot 31, at the corner of Belisle and the old road to St-Sauveur. We don't know when the Guénette family acquired the property or built the house. The original barn was situated where rue du Village now passes.

The Guénette family had a cheese factory at one point, but sold that building to the McConnell family around the turn of the century. Guénette's square log house was probably built in the 1880s. At first it was only 20 feet by 20 feet, but was doubled in size in its early days.

Aurélien Guénette raised his family of five children on the property in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. Aurélien operated a quarry, had a number of snow removal contracts, and was one of the municipality's early garbage collection contractors. By the 50s and 60s, local kids were still playing in a few old rusted trucks and a bulldozer lying in the quarry pit.

A young Swiss-German entrepreneur from Montreal named Hans Schaeper purchased the 99-acre property in the 1970s at auction for \$11,000. He dismantled the original house, numbered each log, and rebuilt it on a new foundation a few yards north of its original site. He added dormer windows and raised the ceiling (many 19th century homes had very low ceilings). The original corner stones of the house are still in place to show its exact location. The new location fronted on a new side street that Schaeper named after his son, Jonathan. The street had been a road to the old Guénette quarry pit. Schaeper upgraded the road to municipal standards and sold a few lots for homes.

Local artist Andrée Gauthier and her husband Dirk Schmekel bought the house in 1984 and have changed nothing since, except for the creation of a pond on a swampy section of their 3-acre lot and the digging of an artesian well to furnish water for the pond. Even though the original restoration was done by a former occupant, Andrée and Dirk embraced the historical character of the home and still work hard to maintain its integrity.

