

270 WILKINSON ROAD

On a rise, with a fine view across the White Brook Creek valley and surrounded by huge old trees, sits a large vernacular Colonial Revival farmhouse which architectural historian Paul Malo described as “estate-like in its setting” and “reek[ing] with character.” This house at 270 Wilkinson Road, which has been in the Wilkinson family for well over 100 years, was designated a Perinton landmark in 1998.



The house, which is approached by a long drive and is surrounded by 50 acres of land, has two full stories and two Colonial Revival porches. The large first-floor windows have transoms with small decorative panes. The clapboards have been retained, as have the cornerboards and the narrow frieze band with its corner returns. Two outbuildings, the old privy and the smokehouse, complement the main house.

The original house was certainly built prior to 1852 and possibly as early as 1811, which is what the Wilkinson family tradition maintains. Unhewn and handhewn timbers in the house are consistent with that early date, although there is no confirmation. However, this part of Perinton was the earliest to be settled by people of European descent, and the town itself was incorporated in 1812. The first name associated with the property does not show up until the 1843 tax list, indicating that the owner was Hugh Pound. By 1848 ownership had passed to Asher Pound, who lived there with his wife Mary and three children, Clarkson, Mary and Albert. They farmed the land for a number of years until it was purchased by Joseph Wilkinson, Jr. in 1878.

The Wilkinson family had moved to Perinton sometime between 1828 and 1831. Joseph was born in Dutchess County in 1783. He married Mary Smith of Poughkeepsie and the couple moved west. Several of their children were born (and at least one died) in Cohocton. The last birth in Cohocton was in 1828 and the next child was born in Perinton in 1831. Three of their 12 children were born on their farm at 340 Pannell Road, including Joseph Jr. It was Joseph Jr. who purchased the farm at 270 Wilkinson Road and subsequently presented it to his son Gilbert on the occasion of his marriage to Alice Jumph in 1886. According to the deed, the couple bought the land from Joseph in 1905 for \$10. They farmed the land, raised two daughters, Lulu and Ruth, and lived their entire lives on that farm.

Gilbert extensively remodeled the original house in 1917. His diary notes that on June 22, 1917, he “commenced to dig the cellar.” In the original floor plan, the front door opened onto a large kitchen-living room, which was flanked by a parlor and a bedroom on the west side. The second floor had three bedrooms with an attic above. Wilkinson family tradition states that it was the first house in (then) Ontario County to have two stories and a full attic. There was also a full basement. In the back there was a one-story summer kitchen, under which were a cistern and a woodshed. Gilbert’s extensive remodeling included a two story addition on the east side, a generator to pump water from the cistern and the well and to power lights, new larger windows, a large front dormer and dining room in front of the east end of the house, a yellow brick

fireplace, and new floors of cherry wood cut from the farm. The summer kitchen was moved nearer the barn and used as a workshop.

After the deaths of Gilbert and Alice, their daughter Ruth Wilkinson Lent continued to live in the house with her two children, Floris and Duane. Ruth recalled that prior to World War II the property, which was about 50 acres at that time, was a “general farm” growing beans, wheat, and potatoes as cash crops. The family also had cows and other stock. At that time, in addition to the smokehouse and privy, there was also a large barn, wagon house, and chicken house to the west of the main house. In the 1940’s, all three structures burned to the ground in a fire that probably started from a spark thrown by a threshing machine. Currently the remaining 30 acres are leased for farming.

The Wilkinson family, since their arrival in Perinton, has been actively involved in the community. The children attended White Brook School (District School #11), and Joseph Sr. was among the founders of the South Perinton United Methodist Church. In 1837 he contributed \$1,000, a huge sum at the time, to retire the church’s mortgage. Over the years, family members have been trustees, Sunday school teachers, choir members, and loyal parishioners of the church. A number are buried in the adjacent cemetery.

Since 1917 when Gilbert remodeled the house, running water has been installed, the former kitchen has become part of an apartment, and a new kitchen was built in the old downstairs bedroom. Large shade trees still surround this excellent example of the evolution of a structure from timber frame to early 20th century Colonial Revival farmhouse. The surrounding acreage, the outbuildings, the long drive, and the church across the street all contribute to the wonderful setting of this Perinton landmark.

Today Floris Lent owns the house, which has been in the family for well over 100 years. To Ms. Lent, living in her family home is a “joy and a pleasure.” It is her fervent wish and hope that the house and land be preserved and maintained as an integral and irreplaceable part of the history and culture of the area.