

## 5935 PITTSFORD-PALMYRA ROAD

When the farmhouse on this site was built, Pittsford-Palmyra Road was a major east-west road, although it had already taken second place to the canal and the railroad. The road was narrow and unpaved, suitable mainly for horse and wagon, the overland transportation of the time. 5935 Pittsford-Palmyra Road first appears on the 1852 map, indicating that at least one part of the house, probably the 1 ½ story east wing, was constructed sometime prior to that date, perhaps as early as the 1830's. The larger two-story rectangular gable-roofed block was most likely constructed around 1850.



In addition to the two-story block and the 1 ½ story east wing, there is a second 1 ½ story rear wing, which is set at right angles to the earlier ones. There are also two porches, both of which shelter original entryways. The porches feature delicately turned posts. The earlier dating of the first two blocks is based on their classical interior moldings, symmetrical façade and bays, and six over six double-hung windows with louvered shutters. The general style is vernacular with some Greek Revival features. Although the house has been sided, details such as the corner boards and raking cornice survive, as does the original clapboard under the siding. The yellow brick chimney is a 20<sup>th</sup> century addition.

The interior of the house has oak plank flooring, screwed down and with wooden plugs, on the first floor. The roof construction is of large 6x6 and 8x8 timbers pegged together. There are two cisterns in the basement, probably one for rain water from the roof and one for water from the well. Several outbuildings, including a smokehouse, a four-hole privy, a chicken coop and a well with a hand pump, make the property an excellent example of an intact rather prosperous farmstead. The pink flamingos in the chimney of the smokehouse and a plywood cow in a corner of the yard, whose hinged head moves, are typical of the late Albert Wilson's sense of humor, who with his wife Judy purchased the house in 1989.

Architectural historian Paul Malo describes the house as “an unusual house” but also one that is “intrinsically an attractive house.” He comments on its “unusual form” with its big block with four windows across the front, and refers to the two porches as “quite elegant.”

Owners of the property were some of Perinton's early pioneers who played a significant role in the town's growth and development. William and Mary Gregory, land speculators from Connecticut, purchased the land as part of a larger purchase of 1200 acres in Perinton in the early 1800's. William served the town in several capacities in the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as pathmaster, fence viewer, and overseer of highways and the poor. His son, William S. was town supervisor from 1818-1820. The second owners of record, Abraham and Phebe Perrin, were part of Perinton's founding Perrin family. The third owners, Alvarado and Lucy Ann Conant were related to Cornelius

Conant, another Perinton pioneer who settled here in 1815. Other owners, Alexander and Lucy Bumpus, William and Alice Brower, and James Wilmarth, are familiar names in Perinton's agricultural history.

Judy Wilson, who currently lives in the house, recalls that her late husband, sculptor Albert Leon Wilson, had driven by the house years before and remembered it because a deer had run in front of his car. It occurred to them at the time of the purchase that the house was meant for them. In addition, the Wilsons had briefly entertained the idea of using the house as a bed and breakfast and subsequently found a sign in one of the sheds that advertised "tourist rooms." It seems that a former owner was killed and his surviving family had advertised rooms for rent in order to create some income. Wilson, known as the "I-beam sculptor," developed the art of creating a three-dimensional piece of sculpture from the flat planes of an I-beam or girder. His sculptures are in a number of private collections as well as in the collections of number of major museums. His works are also on display in area schools, churches and public buildings. The Wilson sons, Brian, Craig, and Jed, as well as son-in-law Bruce Day, are also well-known area artists who have worked in the same medium as the elder Wilson.

Wilson speaks of the house as an exciting place to live, obviously thoroughly enjoying its history. She also notes that the house is in excellent condition and has needed little more than cosmetic upkeep during the family's years there.

Located on busy Pittsford-Palmyra Road and close to a 490 interchange, over the years travelers would stop to ask directions which led the Wilsons to identify their property with the poem *The House by the Side of the Road*. Despite increasing traffic and the widening of Pittsford-Palmyra Road, the house, together with its outbuildings, continues to be a well-known landmark and reminder of Perinton's agricultural heritage.