

DOORS OPEN 2014: Blueprint House to make Doors Open debut



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In many ways, the dwelling currently known as 'Blueprint House' is like dozens of other World War One era homes in Aurora.

The gable end of the two-storey structure faces the street and the house is deeper than it is wide, making the best use of expensive street frontage. These straightforward frame homes typically have four openings in the street façade: a door and a window in the ground floor, and two bedroom windows above.

In one very striking way, however, number 63 Larmont is absolutely unique: its exterior is painted in the vivid blue of an old-fashioned blueprint, a building plan, and many of its details are neatly labelled in white, just as if on a paper plan: 'west elevation,' 'downspout,' 'gas meter.'
But it was not always so!

Residential development in this neighbourhood south of Mosley Street was stimulated by the arrival of three important industries on adjacent Berczy Street: the Underhill and Sisman shoe factory in 1901; Positive Clutch and Pulley in 1911; and the Collie-Cockerill office furniture factory in 1913. Across town, on Tyler Street, the Collis tannery opened in 1912.



Housing was needed for the workers who were attracted to the town by these employment opportunities and property developers responded to that need. Houses similar to the Blueprint House appeared elsewhere on Larmont and on Metcalfe and Harrison, all within a few minutes' walk of the new factories on Berczy.

Not all the new owners were factory workers. The man who built Blueprint House almost certainly did so for investment purposes. The first owner/occupant was a Mrs. Major, the widow of a farmer. She lived in the house herself for a while, but then rented it to a granddaughter and her husband, Veta and Alfred Folliott.

For part of the Folliotts' time here Al was serving overseas; he was awarded the Military Medal for more or less single-handedly taking an enemy gun position.

Mrs. Major sold the property in 1919 and the purchaser at that time, and again when the property next changed hands in 1929, was a retired farmer. Clearly the 'housing for factory workers' theory did not always apply!

At last, in the mid-1930s, someone who worked at Sisman's shoe factory moved in to this house about two minutes' brisk walk from his workplace. Russell and Mary Chapman started out as tenants but purchased the property in 1938.

The Chapmans sold number 63 Larmont Street late in 1949. The new owners were Reginald and Minnie Morning; Mr. Morning was an electrician and Mrs. Morning a school teacher at Aurora Public School. In 1952 the school moved from Church Street to the former high school building on Wells Street, right across the Town Park from the Mornings' home.

After almost fifteen years of ownership, the Mornings sold number 63 in the autumn of 1964. The purchasers at that time were John and Barbara Hepple, who went on to own the property for some four decades: the longest tenure to date.

And now number 63 Larmont is the 'Blueprint House.' On a website about the house the creator of this decorating scheme muses about the transition from plan, or blueprint, to three dimensional home, and suggests that perhaps the house is neither a two-dimensional drawing of something imaginary nor a three-dimensional construction, but a 'spirit-filled' zero-dimensional creation.