



The Wattie House (also known locally as the Channen House) was constructed in 1872 at Lot 10, Concession 7, in former Vespra Township.

Charles Forbes Wattie (the 1st) and his wife Euphemia McHardy emigrated from Strathdon, Aberdeen, Scotland to Canada settling on Lot 19, Concession 2, former Vespra. One of their sons, Charles Forbes Wattie (the 2nd) married Isabella Orok. In 1862 they bought land from William

Ardagh, who had obtained it from the Crown. This 100 heavily forested acres was located on Concession 7, former Vespra. The Minesing Road (now Highway 26) cut through the northeast corner of the property, leaving a pie-shaped parcel of land. On this corner the Watties built their original crude shelter around a large stone using the back for the fireplace. This stone is still in the same spot today. The Watties lived in this shelter while they constructed a log cabin on what was to become the south side of the Minesing Road. During this time Indians continued to camp on the southern section of the farm near the springs. Clay pottery and other artifacts have been found on this site.

While living in the log cabin, Charles and Isabella started to build a stone house in 1872. The plans were drawn by Charles' brother-in-law James Bruce Spence. Spence worked for the Department of Railways and was a member of the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers. He also worked on the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa.

The house took three years to complete and cost \$5000 (or possibly five years and \$3000). It is thought that the home was originally called Stratheden. Through a misunderstanding the house has become known as Strathhaven.

The house had unusual features for its time: the carved key stone over main entry door in the face of Charles F. Wattie; two story window in the staircase, bedrooms with built-in closets; and duct work for central heating. Split field stone, hand cut with a flat edge were used to build walls 18 inches thick. The split stone goes right to the roof line (uncut stones formed the cellar walls). The unusual formation of the chimneys could be seen in the photographs taken after the fire in 2001.

The house was built as one unit. The southern portion of the house has 10 foot ceilings and includes the front entry and main hall with the front parlour and the guest bedroom on the eastern side and the dining room on the west side.

The main hall is almost a room in itself with an archway at the north end where the open staircase begins and the hall turns to the left leading to the pantry and kitchen.

The kitchen is the northern part of the house. It is separated from the western section by a wall approximately 30 inches deep which can be seen clearly in the doorway leading from the front hall. The kitchen is a large room with 9.5 foot ceilings and windows looking both east and west. There are two doors on the west side, one which originally led to a summer pantry and the other to a side porch. A door on the north side led to a summer kitchen and woodshed (now replaced by a family room). There is a flight of stairs from the kitchen upwards to the second storey and another down to the cellar. The tongue and groove kitchen ceiling was destroyed in the 2001 fire and has been replaced.

The main staircase to the upper level is located at the rear of the main hall with several steps to a landing, and then a left turn up the flight of stairs. An unusual feature is a narrow window, the bottom sill level with the main staircase landing and reaching to the ceiling of the second floor. This was not in the original plans, but it is believed it was used for the stonemasons' access to upstairs and then converted to a window. The window is a stunning feature of the home and was untouched by the 2001 fire.

The open staircase leads to the southern portion of second storey. The bannister runs along the length of the hall with a bedroom on the east side, three bedrooms on the south side and a trunk room (now a bathroom) at the head on the stairs on the western wall. The ceilings in the front portion are 9.5 feet.

A doorway at the top of the stairs leads to the northern portion over the kitchen. The ceilings are 8 feet in the centre sloping on each side to a height of 5'8". This area is divided into two rooms. The first room for storage and the second for hired man's quarters.

The cellar is divided into three sections. Under the hall, dining room and pantry is an area large enough to hold a complete winter's supply of wood. There is only a crawl space under the living room and bedroom. The area under the kitchen is a fruit cellar which had a stucco ceiling until after the 2001 fire.

Of significance is the woodwork throughout the house. The exterior features included: gingerbread under the eaves on the southern and western gables with kingpins at the peak; wooden canopies over the front parlour and master bedroom windows. Originally attached to the front of the house was a wooden covered veranda the width of the dining room and hall taken down in 1947. There was also a wooden covered porch and pantry on the west side of the house along the northern section (now an entrance porch and sunroom).

Original interior woodwork featured: double entrance doors, wainscoting in the dining room and kitchen, wood paneling under the staircase, newel posts, bannisters, four panel doors and spindles in the staircase, baseboards and wood trim throughout. All windows have 15 inch interior wooden sills. In the dining room, hall and living room there were also plaster mouldings and medallions.

Charles Forbes Wattie (the 3rd) son of Charles and Isabella worked the farm. He married Ella Leadly. They had no children. Charles became interested in politics and served on Vespra Council for many years, being the Township Reeve from 1913 to 1922.

In 1945, Ted and Ann Channen approached Mr. Wattie to purchase the property. He agreed. However, the night before the papers were to be signed Charles Wattie died. On his death, the property came to his sister Isabella (Belle) who had married Robert Caldwell of Oro. She agreed that the Channens could proceed with the purchase. Since 1946, the Channen family maintained the house in near original condition.

On October 30, 2001, the roof caught fire. The roof was destroyed and the second storey was extensively damaged by fire and water. Fire and smoke did not get down to the first floor but there was extensive water damage. Fortunately, the thick stonewalls saved the structure and the quick action of the local fire department saved much of the first floor. The Channens were committed to the restoration of the house. R & F Construction of Orillia were engaged to oversee this project.

A new wooden roof was constructed including roofing planks rather than plywood. The gingerbread was replaced with the exception of the crown moulding, which was replaced by a reproduction based on the original design. With the exception of the two western windows and the two narrow windows in the master bedroom, the upper windows were replaced. With the exception of the door and door frame to the closet in the master bedroom, all wood trim and doors has been replaced in the second storey. All interior walls upstairs and the kitchen walls were replaced with drywall. The wainscoting and tongue & groove ceiling in the kitchen were also replaced. Five spindles for the main staircase were reproduced based on the original design.