

Heritage Property – Erb-Kumpf House



172 King St. S.

The Erb-Kumpf House was built by Abraham Erb, c. 1812; additions, Barnabas Devitt, c. 1849 and John Hoffman, c. 1855

Designated Feb. 19, 1979: bylaw 79-21, “The Erb-Kumpf House”

The Erb-Kumpf House is likely the oldest house still standing in Waterloo. The original portion of the house — the first homestead in Waterloo — was built around 1812 by Abraham Erb. The immigrant from Pennsylvania acquired land which now comprises the whole uptown of Waterloo. He established a sawmill (1808) and a grist mill (1816) on Beaver (Laurel) Creek at the point where the main colonization road, King Street, bridged the creek.

Erb built his house on higher land just to the south above the cedar swamp of the creek. Several additions subsequently altered the appearance of the house as it passed from owner to owner; Barnabas Devitt (Abraham and Magdalena Erb's adopted son, from 1835), Elias Snider (from 1851), John Hoffman (from 1856), Christian Kumpf (from 1869) and Ford Kumpf (from 1899). Each of the owners of the house earned a prominent place in Waterloo's history — Erb for his pioneering enterprise; Snider for his business acumen and as a developer of the land north of Erb Street; Hoffman as the premier land-developer south of Erb Street; Devitt as a businessman and his son Benjamin, born in the house, as mayor; Kumpf as a newspaperman (of the Chronicle, from 1860) and longtime postmaster of Waterloo as well as co-founder of the Dominion Life Assurance Co. in 1889 and mayor.



His son, Ford Kumpf, who was born in the house, energized many of Waterloo's institutions until his death in 1960.

As a consequence of various renovations, the two-storey white-clapboard building shows a mixture of architectural styles. Originally a plain gable-roofed house of rectangular plan, with a main façade and door that looked northward to the mills that Erb had built and were the reason for Waterloo's existence, the structure was extended at its western end (probably about 1849).

Along with the further addition of two wings and a second-storey balcony (about 1855), it was eventually oriented toward the village's main street. As an element of design, the six-over-six arrangement of window panes is a Georgian characteristic. The symmetrical front porch — between the two wings with its latticework, Gothic bargeboard and Doric columns — reflects a Regency influence.