

Almonte

My earliest memories of Almonte are as a 5 year old who had just moved in with her parents from Smallbrooks next door where we had lived with my grandmother. Almonte was my _home until I married aged 21. I am now 64.

These are my very happy early childhood memories....eventually the continual maintenance of the house and garden became too much for my parents and the house and land were sold for housing development. The house was bulldozed and burnt down.....

Almonte was a bungalow made of wood that had been painted white. The wood all needed rubbing down and repainting at least every 5 years....very labour intensive! In one corner a narrow metal chimney pipe stuck out from the cellar with a coned top at roof level. Almonte had a red tiled roof and a cellar which was about 3 foot below ground. The bungalow was originally accessed by about 8 wooden steps into the front porch and then into the kitchen. The kitchen was a spacious room which had a door leading to the cellar steps in the opposite corner. There is a rough sketch plan of the house attached.

The cellar had a concrete rendered external wall and it extended to the full area of the bungalow. It had a cement floor and a soakaway in the corner. It was used for storing sacks of potatoes, baskets of apples and forcing an occasional rhubarb root. Dad had a workbench with his tools down there too. One year the cellar flooded with heavy rainfall to a foot deep. Everything was damaged and a pump was hired to get rid of the flood water. After that a new pump was installed which turned on automatically when the water level in the sump rose. The cellar also contained a coal store and a solid fuel boiler which voraciously consumed various cokes, coal, wood, potato peelings and rubbish. The boiler powered a gravity circulated central heating system of 5 large radiators. One in the bathroom, and 2 each in the sitting room and kitchen.

When we first moved in mum was alarmed to find we had mice. After finding mouseholes in the corner of the kitchen Dad blocked the holes quickly and from then on cats eliminated the rodents! At least one warm contented cat was always to be found sat on top of one of those big radiators in winter. Radiators must have been about 9 " across, 3 ft wide and 2 ft high.

The sitting room and kitchen were always kept really warm and cosy, night and day by the radiators as long as the boiler was kept stoked up regularly. The bedrooms were, however, cold in the winter, we had lino on the floors and in winter there would be ice shapes on the inside of the windows which could be scratched off slowly with your fingernails to see out.

There was a side door which opened out onto the verandah. No one else in the district had a verandah, which was a curiosity to the neighbours! This had an enclosed area underneath which was great fun to play hide and seek in.

The garden was originally fully used for growing flowers and vegetables. The side of the driveway had borders of colourful bedding plants which created beautiful displays. Dad also grew beautifully coloured scented sweet peas up tall canes which he entered in local shows. Later there were massive dahlias which could be cut for vases. The large greenhouse was sometimes a mass of scarlet, white and pink geraniums. At other times the greenhouses stank of well rotted manure from Mr MacDonalds farm which we spread on the ground before our tomatoes were planted. Later they were full of the distinct scent of fresh tomatoes as 100s of plants were covered in loaded vines of fruit in the hot glasshouses.

In the early days I remember friends and relations coming with baskets to pick blackcurrants and raspberries while we children played cops and

robbers chasing round the garden and clambering up and down and under the verandah whilst pelting each other with tiny windfall apples. We would crawl on our tummies along the rows of potatoes and struggle up the apple tree. We would watch butterflies floating over rows of blue scabious and white daisies and drink sickly kiaora squash from bright coloured plastic mugs.

The garden was a child's paradise. We lit bonfires and fed chickens. We made daisy chains on the lawn and showed friends small soft mewling kittens that would need new homes when they grew. We helped dig up potatoes in summer and discovered bright pink rhubarb under circular tin cans in springtime. There was always something to see in the greenhouses too. The large greenhouse was used for tomatoes, and bedding plants, the one by the potting shed for cucumbers and tomatoes and the one by the house had all this with old fashioned scales to sell our produce to passers by.

We were told that Almonte was based on Canadian designs however in Christmas 2016 we travelled extensively through Georgia, a former USSR state. Whilst on the train from Batumi to Tblisi we were amazed by the design of the really old Georgian homes we saw from the train.

They were so similar to Almonte!

Many were made of wood, cellars the same height above the ground, almost square in shape and with verandahs.....I could not help but come to the conclusion that the original design was from Georgia....there were many Georgian emigrants to Canada in the 1800s and earlier!

I hope you find these memories interesting and useful. You are welcome to share them with your family.

I would love to hear of any other previous memories of Almonte .

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From
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