


Royal Retreat



Princess Elizabeth once told her nanny that she wanted to marry a farmer and have lots of horses and dogs. Fate made her Queen, but whenever state duties allowed, she pursued her love of horses and dogs. The royal tour of Canada in 1973 presented one such opportunity, in north Halton, on the edge of the Niagara Escarpment, at Rolling Hills Farm.



WRITTEN BY JOHN MARK ROWE
PHOTOGRAPHED BY MIKE DAVIS

View from the pond. The Queen and Prince Philip would have seen these two residences during their brief stay at Rolling Hills Farm. They were hosted by the Wallaces in the modern home at right.



▲ The modern bungalow commissioned by Brigadier-General Wallace has had some upgrades but remains essentially as it was when The Queen visited in 1973.

Rolling Hills Farm between Erin and Georgetown has a fascinating history. The beautiful farm became well known under the stewardship of Brigadier-General Frederick Campbell Wallace. In 1963 and 1965, Wallace allowed an archeological dig alongside Rogers Creek on his adjoining property across the road. Evidence of a pre-historic Iroquoian-speaking village was uncovered.

In 1961 Wallace had purchased the Rogers' family fishing camp that sported cabins for overnight stays, a 1929 dam that flooded an old quarry, large barn and a solid stone house built in 1883. In preparation for retirement Wallace commissioned a modern

bungalow on his farm in 1963.

After serving in World War II and heading the Tizard mission that invented radar, Wallace led a high-profile corporate career. He lived in Georgetown with his wife Vera as head of Smith & Stone. He was involved in several other corporations, including as a director of Eaton's department stores.

Yet his business credentials were not what interested the Queen. Brigadier and Mrs. Wallace loved horses. Wallace served as hunt master for the Eglinton and Caledon Hunt Club from 1958 until 1976. Rolling Hills Farm became the Saturday morning rendezvous for the riders of the club. Wallace was also chairman of the Ontario Racing Commission from 1965 until April 1973.

Royal Tour of 1973

Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip were invited to Canada twice in 1973. They spent 11 days on the first trip and four days on a trip beginning on the 31st of July. The second trip was to open the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, in Ottawa.

The first trip began on June 25 in Toronto and involved an extended tour of southern Ontario. The royal couple flew to Toronto and were greeted by His Excellency Governor-General Roland Michener and Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau. In a nod to history, The Queen and Prince Philip travelled by train, using the Governor-General's private rail cars. They made official visits to Cobourg, Kingston, Cambridge, Kitchener,

Waterloo, London, St. Catharines, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Scarborough, Brampton, and Malton. The royal agenda for June 29 indicated that at noon, the royal couple would proceed to their "rest area."

After visiting Brampton, the royal couple were whisked north to the John Eaton estate, Hawkridge Farm, in the Caledon hills. Not far away was the estate of Brigadier Wallace in Esquesing Township. The gruelling public schedule was placed on hold while the royal couple enjoyed the beauty of the Niagara Escarpment.

Enjoying the Escarpment

The Queen and Prince Philip would have spotted the drystone fence alongside the dusty road before arriving at the front gates with fieldstone



▲ The drystone wall at the edge of the farm, with a garage and the barn beyond.



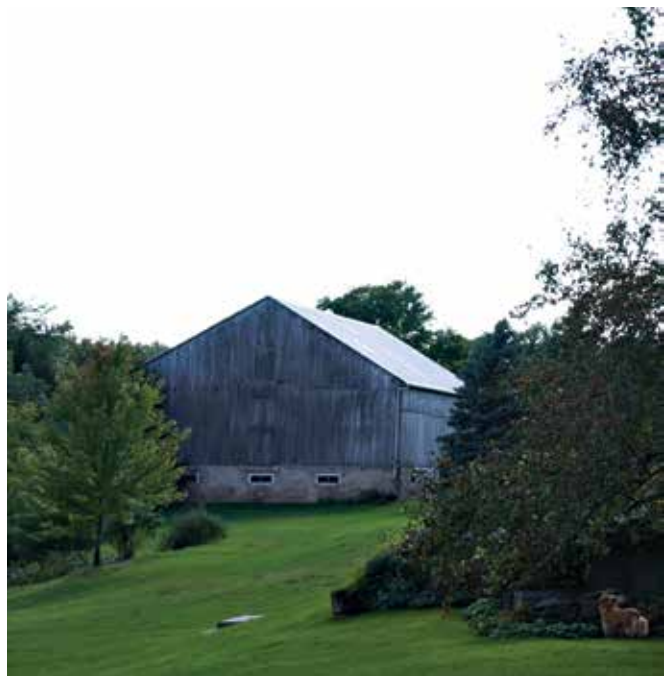
▲ Whole story in one place. Affixed to one of the farm's gate posts, this plaque from Heritage Halton Hills says it all.

posts. Brigadier Wallace had had the drystone wall and gates constructed by Glen Williams' stone mason Gerry Ingles when his new house was being built.

To the right of the drive was the two-storey Gothic Revival-style house built of stone extracted from the quarry on the property by

owner Frederick Near, a stone mason by trade. The gables and porch of the 1883 house were dressed in gingerbread trim, topped with ornate finials.

The driveway drops halfway down the hill to the single-storey retirement home of Brigadier and Mrs. Wallace, clad in cedar



▲ The large barn that sheltered fine, well-kept horses, still stands.



▲ Fieldstone posts support gates at the farm entrances.



▲ A plaque on the old stone house which was built from stone quarried on the property.



◀ The Queen likely saw this gravestone for a beloved pet who died in 1971.

shakes. This beautiful home with a huge picture window looking down the river valley included a great room with a fireplace. The master bedroom included a dressing room and ensuite bathroom.

A stroll on the grounds allowed inspection of the several cabins still extant from the days of a fishing camp. A large dam created a trout pond in the former quarry. Roger's Creek continued below the dam passing through a

second pond as it trickled down the Escarpment to join the Credit River. The remnants of the pioneer apple orchard included a memorial stone to the Brigadier's dog, Duke, who died in 1971.

Love of Horses

At the end of the pond stood the massive barn where The Queen would have been shown the stables and met the resident horses. We can only imagine her pleasure.



▲ The original farmhouse dates to 1883 and was built by stone mason Frederick Near.

Saturday morning may have brought out many more horses and their dogs, belonging to the riders of the Eglinton and Caledon Hunt Club for their usual chase.

The Queen's appreciation of horses was demonstrated at her funeral procession in September 2022, led by five Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), with four sitting astride the magnificent horses gifted to the Queen by the RCMP. That tradition

began in 1969 with the gift of Burmese which Her Majesty rode at the Trooping of the Colour ceremony for the next 18 years.

Queen Elizabeth loved horses, of that there was no doubt, but as Queen Camilla has revealed, her passion was horse racing. Brigadier Wallace and The Queen would have had many points to discuss about their horses, his involvement in the Hunt Club and particularly about

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◀ View for a queen. This is the original picture window in the living room of the bungalow where The Queen stayed.

▶ The Queen may have slept here. Although not known for sure, it seems likely that The Queen and Prince Philip stayed in this master bedroom in order to meet members of the Eglinton and Caledon Hunt Club the next morning when they gathered at Rolling Hills Farm.



the next item on the royal tour – The Queen’s Plate. The 114th Queen’s Plate, Canada’s oldest thoroughbred horse race was held at Woodbine Racetrack in Toronto on the afternoon on Saturday September 30, 1973. The gold cup and 50 guineas were presented

by Her Majesty to the winner, Royal Chocolate. After the race The Queen and Prince Philip boarded an airplane at the Malton airport and continued the royal tour in Prince Edward Island. She was there on Dominion Day to commemorate the centennial of Prince Edward

Island as a province. Today Rolling Hills Farm is still a private estate, designated under the Ontario Heritage Act. It retains all the charm and beauty that was enjoyed by Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip on their very short rest break during the 1973 royal tour of Canada. **NEV**

John Mark Rowe is an active historian and author. He has published several local history books and articles. Rowe received the Ontario Trust Lifetime Heritage Award and the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee medal.



▲ This stamp of The Queen was issued to commemorate her visit in 1973, when she briefly stayed at Rolling Hills Farm. IMAGE COURTESY OF JOHN MARK ROWE.

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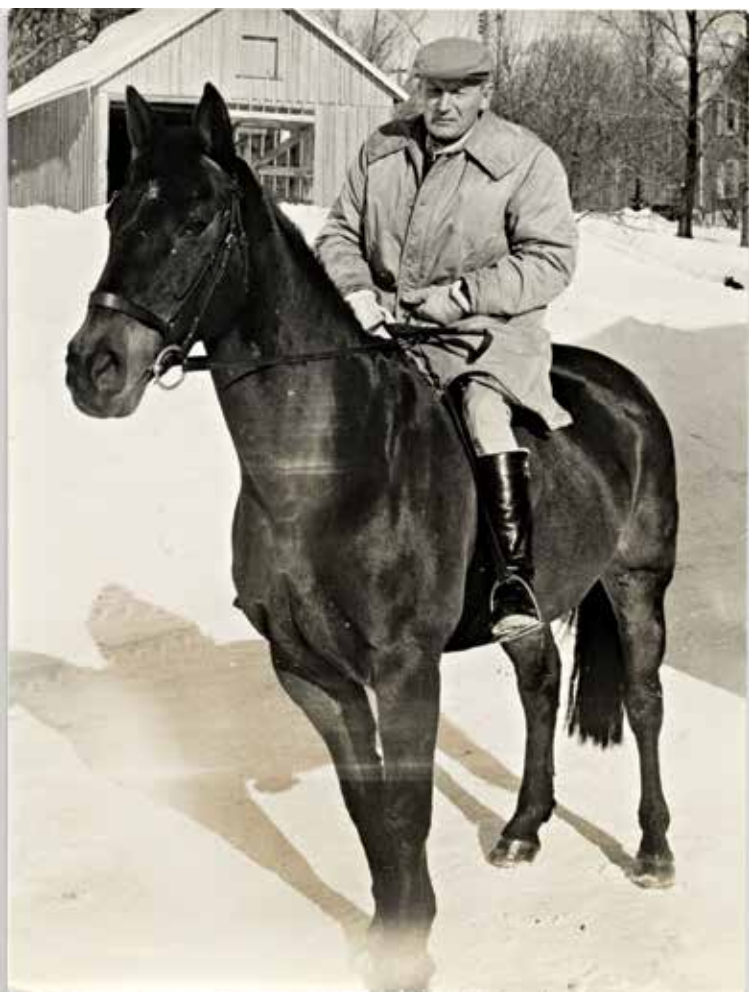
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▲ The Brigadier on one of his horses at his farm in 1966. He and The Queen shared a love of horses. PHOTO FROM ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES.

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