

Converted silos — living in the round

Mrs. John Vogel of Bright's Grove, Ontario, came originally from the Netherlands, where for years she saw people convert windmills to unique and attractive homes. So in 1963, when she and her husband were house-hunting and came across an unused silo, the conversion idea came naturally.

They found the silo on a 12- by 30-metre (40- by 100-foot) lot which had been part of a farm on the south shore of Lake Huron, and today their unusual home towers above the conventional houses surrounding it.

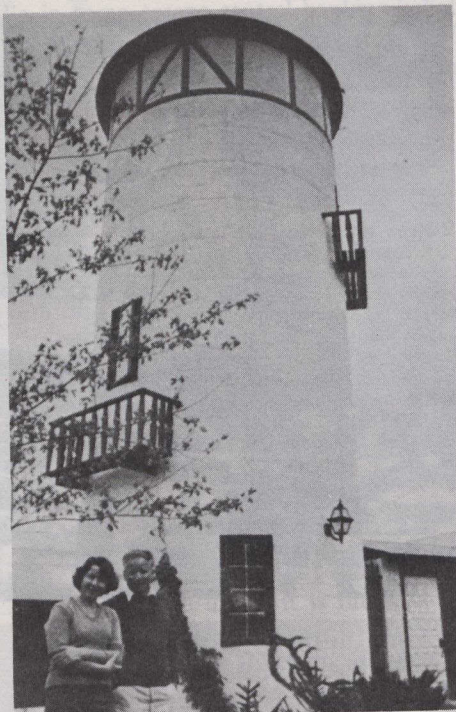
It cost Mrs. Vogel about \$9,000 in 1964 to have a contractor make the silo liveable by clearing away rotten wood; painting and insulating the walls; installing floors supported by wood beams; piercing the walls for windows; installing plumbing and electricity; erecting a spiral staircase along one side of the inside wall; adding a circular set of windows at the top of the silo covered by a peaked roof; and installing a heater fuelled by natural gas on the main floor.

Three years ago the Vogels decided to renovate and expand. The outside of the 14-metre (45-foot) high silo was covered in attractive bricks to match those used in parts of the one-storey house they had built as an attachment to the silo.

Thermal double windows were installed mainly for aesthetic reasons. Warm air from the main floor space heater rises to heat the three living areas above. There is a living room on the fourth floor surrounded with windows which offer a spectacular view of the neighbouring houses, farmland and the blue waters of Lake Huron.

A fully-equipped kitchen on the third floor and a bedroom on the second (complete with a shower and washroom facilities) make the silo a comfortable and self-sufficient home. A black wooden spiral staircase along the white stuccoed inside wall of the four-metre (13 foot) diameter silo joins the eating, sleeping and living areas with the study and entry on the ground floor.

A few miles to the east there is another converted silo. Mr. and Mrs. Rich Ritter have just finished the latest phase of the conversion of the structure which they bought 15 years ago along with the barn (now removed) that adjoined it on a large farm tract.



The Ritters stand in front of their silo.

The second floor is already finished and used as an occasional bedroom, especially by guests. The two top floors are joined by a steel ladder along the wall. The main floor entry level has a wooden staircase curving along the wall up to the second floor. The floors are supported by steel beams; there is one window for ventilation and light on each floor augmented by several small opaque glass squares embedded in the walls on the upper floors. All the walls are insulated and heating is by means of one small electric unit on the ground level.

The Ritters have done all the renovation work themselves at a cost of about \$5,000 over the past three years.

More recently they have had a large ranch-style house constructed as an extension to the silo. During construction, the family lived in a nearby house on their farm property. When asked why they decided to convert the silo instead of tearing it down the answer was simply "it was here and it was different". At the time the Ritters were unaware of the Vogels' project not far away.

No special permits or approvals were required for the families to convert their silos. Similarly, no government assistance was sought for either conversion.

(Curt Halen, a senior planner with the Ontario Ministry of Housing, prepared the foregoing article for Housing Ontario, August/September 1978.)

Canada/Malawi bilateral investment protection pact

Canada's economic and trade links with Malawi were strengthened recently with the signature of a bilateral investment protection agreement in Malawi. The agreement, which is tied directly to the Canadian Foreign Investment Insurance Program administered by the Export Development Corporation (EDC), is designed to foster increased trade and investment to the mutual benefit of the two Commonwealth nations.

Malawi's signature to the accord indicates to Canadian businessmen that this southeast African nation is keen to develop its industrial base and trade links with Canada. The EDC program insures Canadian investors in other countries against the risk of loss by reason of political actions in the host country.

Canada has signed similar agreements of interest to the business community with 22 countries: Antigua, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Jamaica, Indonesia, Israel, Liberia, Malaysia, Montserrat, Morocco, Pakistan, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Singapore, and Trinidad and Tobago.

EDC recently approved loans, export credits and surety insurance as well as foreign investment guarantees totalling \$146.392 million to support prospective export sales of \$166.07 million to Algeria, Argentina, Cuba, Haiti, Iran, Mexico, Portugal, South Africa, Venezuela and Yugoslavia.

The expected sales will create or maintain some 6,000 man-years of employment in Canada and will involve 11 suppliers and at least 40 sub-suppliers across the country.

The transactions involve such goods and services as aircraft, locomotives, airport projects, dump trucks and a pelletizing plant.

EDC is the federally-owned commercial enterprise that provides loans to support export sales, export credits and surety insurance, foreign investment guarantees and other financial facilities to Canadian exporters to enable them to compete internationally.

Federal beef grading has been carried out in Canada since 1929. The last change in the grading system was made in 1972.