

# Preserving our Culture, Arts & Heritage

**Bartlett-Travis House**  
500 N. Ridge Road  
Canton, MI 48188

The early version of this house was a story and a half “Greek Revival” cottage, typical of “2<sup>nd</sup> generation houses” built in Canton in the 1840’s, and was first owned by Thomas and Maria Bartlett. This house was located at the corner of Warren and Canton Center Roads. In this house, they raised eight children. In 1861, the call for recruits for the Michigan infantry came, and two Bartlett boys, John and James answered, along with two sons-in-law. James died from his wounds after one of the bloodiest battles of the war, the Battle of the Wilderness. Bartlett boys also participated in the battle of Gettysburg.

Son George bought the family home in 1867. He updated and modernized it, by raising it a full two stories, adding the Italianate details found with the paired brackets under the eaves, and added the frilly porch on the front; as well as adding the kitchen ell on the back.

In 1908 William and Martha Travis bought the house. They and their descendants owned this sprawling house until the 1930’s. The Travis family added the modern “Colonial Revival” wrap around porch onto the house around 1919. Following the sale in the 1950’s, the house changed hands several times over the years, and was last owned by Ken Dividock, a local realtor, who donated the house to the Canton Historic District Commission. The house was moved to this site in 1988. Renovation and restoration began in 1994 by local carpenter, Rex Harvey. In 2002 the house was completed and opened to the public. Today, the house hosts tours and is available for private parties.

Rent the Bartlett-Travis House for your next Special Event!

The Historic Bartlett-Travis House is the ideal setting for wedding photos, showers, rehearsal dinners and family gathering, and offer a unique setting for business meetings.

A Leisure Services staff member will remain on hand for the duration of your event to ensure your complete satisfaction. Contact Canton Leisure Services at 734/394-5470.



## Bartlett Travis House Quick Facts

- Original owner was Darius Blackman and the home and property may have been given as a gift to his daughter Maria when she married Thomas Bartlett.
- In 1867 George Bartlett bought the property from his parents.
- William and Martha Travis purchased the Bartlett farm in 1908, their daughter Ella Rowe, inherited the house (and adjoining property) about 1924. She continued ownership until at least 1954.
- By 1959, Thomas Myers owned the house. In 1961 Mrs. Thomas Myers owned it and operated an antique shop in the home.
- John Darakijan bought the house in 1975.
- In 1988, Kev Dividock, a local realtor, donated the house to Canton Township.
- The home was moved to its present site at 500 N. Ridge Road in 1989, where it was placed on a new foundation, a new roof and chimneys added.
- Rex Harvey, a local carpenter who specializes in the restoration of historic houses, was hired to restore the house. Restoration began in 1994 and was completed in the Fall of 2002.



## Bedrooms

- When the Bartlett-Travis house was first built, it was only one and a half stories tall.

The upper story, as typical, was a loft-type room where the children slept. People usually didn't have private bedrooms during early settlement periods.



- As areas became more settled, modern, private bedrooms became popular. George Bartlett in the 1870's raised the roof on the house to build a full two stories, and created separate bedrooms. The original configuration of bedrooms has changed over the years due to later remodeling and the introduction of indoor plumbing.

- This bedroom suite is a cherry Eastlake style antique bed, dating to the 1870's. This set is unique as it has the two banks of drawers. The top drawers are lined with blue velvet, and the tops are pink marble. A Cheval-type beveled glass mirror is mounted between them for a full vanity view.
- The light fixture is an antique Eastlake gas light fixture dating to the 1870's. This fixture and the one in the parlor have been carefully restored, rewired and feature authentic glass period shades.
- The bed features a quilt, which was a common household item in the 1800's. Quilts were made from bits of old clothes and left over scraps from sewing projects to keep the family warm throughout the winters. They were also an opportunity for women to express themselves artistically through their needlework, their color arrangements and design of the quilt blocks. Often, quilting provided a chance for neighbor women to get together to visit and quilt a top together.



## Dining Room

Nineteenth Century dining rooms varied from the most elegant, lavish, sparkling, chambers, to the most simple, and even crude rooms.

Typically, on 19th century farms, they needed to be big enough to host large family gatherings for holidays, and special events. Day to day meals were taken in the kitchen, and during harvests, meals were usually taken outside on the lawn when farm wives would cook for maybe 15 or more thrash hands.



The furnishings in this room are typical from the 1860-1870 time period. The chairs are Eastlake walnut side chairs with caned bottoms. The table is a walnut dining table from the 1870's.



In the Bartlett-Travis house dining room, we call your attention to the wall paper, and the custom designed ceiling paper. The paper is hand printed and screened just as they did it over 100 years ago, using colors and designs originating in the late 19th century.

The elaborate ceiling features gilded butterflies, moths, dragonflies and mica spider webs designs adapted by the Victorians from Japanese decoration.

The Frieze is what we today call the border paper, and illustrates the Victorian's love for nature and the outdoors with the iris and cat tail motifs adapted from a Wallace Crane original; the body paper is below the frieze and supports the outdoorsy elements from above, with an adaptation of William Morris Willow Boughs.





Over the front door is revealed one of the timbers that frame this house. This house is a post and beam house, which means it was built sort of like a barn. You can see the marks in the beam the peg that joined the posts with the beams with a brace and in the corners you can see the protruding corners of the corner posts, and in the center of the room, the large support posts protrude from the wall.

The light fixture is a reproduction of late Victorian gas chandeliers. Gas fixtures always have a pipe coming from the ceiling to deliver the gas, wide fittings to allow air to circulate and cool the flame, and keys on the arms to turn the gas on or off. These gas chandeliers were manufactured from the 1880's through the 1910's.

### Sitting Room

This room may have been used as an informal sitting room like our family rooms today. Visitors would come and sit a spell, the family would gather here for reading, sewing, chatting, game playing or whatever. This room could also have been used as a front hall where visitors were transient to the parlor or other rooms in the house. Informal private meetings could have been held here, as well as the business of the farm could have been conducted at a desk here.



The wallpaper in this room is a document print from the Bradbury and Bradbury collection. This paper represents the Renaissance Revival period of the post Civil War era.

The Bartlett Travis House's Victorian elements are Italianate style. From tax records we estimate that the house was Victorianized in the 1870's by George Bartlett, son of Thomas and Maria Bartlett. This is especially evident with the lavish fret work, the wrought iron cresting on the small front porch, and the paired brackets under the eaves. The modernization of the house reflected George Bartlett's growing affluence.

An important feature in this room is the pocket door. When George remodeled the house, parlors were all the rage. He created the popular pocket door by doubling the thickness of the



wall, allowing a large door to be hung on rollers suspended from a rail, to close the parlor off except for courting and for funerals.

The center light fixture here is a reproduction, and is an electric style light fixture. Electric lights became more common in the 1890's, although houses often would have both gas and electric, as delivery of electricity was unreliable, and the gas fixtures kept things illuminated.

The walnut secretary is an early Eastlake piece, with the historic wavy glass still intact. This desk dates to the early 1870's and would have been typical in a well to do farmer's house.

Next to the desk is a small enameled parlor stove. No real evidence of a fireplace was ever found in this house, although we think it must have had one when it was first built. By the 1850's parlor stoves or pot bellied stoves were in style, and many homes in Canton sported several. Evidence tells us that a parlor stove was located in this spot, as the original chimney had a hole in the flu for the stove pipe.

## Parlor

This room is one of the most original rooms of the house. In the Dining Room we see the protruding corners of the support posts in the corners of the room. In this room, those posts were "chiseled" out to form inside corners, which appeared more sophisticated and refined than the more primitive post and beam style. This can be observed in the corner of the room, where the plaster was left off to let you see the work.



Around the windows is the original "Egyptian" or "Solomon's Rule" molding that was very typical of the Greek revival period (1820-1850's). This was pretty fancy for early farm houses in Canton. Under the windows are raised panels, also pretty fancy for this area in the 1840's.



The wall paper is an adaptation print based on papers that were popular during that era. In renovating the house, we discovered the double wall, which houses the Victorian pocket door. The original wall still had the original wall paper on it, and it can be observed in the corner window to the past.

Wall paper was widely available to people in settled areas, and became more affordable as mass marketing and machine printers were developed.



The spinet pump organ would have been a cherished family piece. Families gathered around a parlor organ, a piano, and even violins and guitars to sing and enjoy a wide variety of music.

The parlor settee in the corner is a finger-rolled walnut settee with a lady's chair. This understated set dates to the 1860's. Ladies' chairs usually had no arms to allow full skirts to drape over the seat, and ladies were expected to sit properly and not lounge. Gentlemen's chairs were larger and usually had arms, and were more suitable for lounging and relaxing.

The chandelier is an antique Neo Greco gas light fixture which has been reconditioned and electrified. The chaste Greek forms were especially popular throughout the 19th century. Canton had many Greek revival style homes built throughout our countryside during the 1800's.

## Kitchen

Until the industrial revolution in the late 1800's, farm kitchens were very primitive, and by our standards, would remain "primitive" until the 1920's.



- As the industrial Revolution progressed during the last quarter of the 1800's, modern appliances were introduced into households. Open cooking hearths were replaced with wood burning cook stoves.
- Cook stoves were used for everything. Nineteenth and early 20th century women boiled water for bathing, raised bread dough on the warming shelf, heated flat irons for pressing clothes, and curdled milk for cottage cheese.
- Often in the early spring when a sudden cold snap would hit, you might find a box of baby pigs, baby chicks, puppies or kittens keeping warm by the radiant heat from the cook stove.
- Kitchens didn't have running water either. Most kitchens were equipped with a "pitcher pump" mounted on the edge of a "dry sink" which raised water from the cistern, an underground storage vessel which collected rainwater from the roof of the house. It was used for bathing, washing clothes, and cleaning. It was never used for drinking or cooking.
- The Bartlett-Travis house had a flowing well under the kitchen. A trap door was cut in the floor to reach it. They had a second trap door which may have been to store root cellar-type vegetables like potatoes, apples, carrots, squash etc. or to cure sauerkraut or coleslaw.
- In this kitchen we have a Hoosier Cabinet which was all the rage for modern kitchens beginning in the early 1900's. These cabinets provided convenient storage for cooking supplies, dishes, pans, food, as well as a large work surface which could neatly slide back into the cabinet.



- In the corner is a grain painted corner cupboard which would have stored dishes for the housewife. Grain painting is a folk art technique which was popular throughout the 1800's and frequently used on furniture, interior trim moldings and doors to make them look like more expensive woods.
- The dishes in the cabinet are Pink Tower Spode, which was a popular transfer ware type ironstone in the mid 1800's. During that period, exotic and fantasy type motifs were popular. Typical colors used in Transfer ware were blue, pink and brown.

## Outbuildings

### Barn

- 1 ½ stories, gable end
- Clapboard siding
- Sliding wagon doors on west facade
- Entry window and door on north facade



### Shed

- Small clapboard sided gable
- Partial wood door remains
- Smaller door above entry door
- Shingle Roof

## The Landing and Rufus Porter the Itinerate Painter of the 19th Century

This "fresco" was painted by local artist, Karen Folk Thomas in the style of the 19th century renowned artist, Rufus Porter. Karen used pictures from an 1876 Wayne County Atlas that featured pen and ink drawings of several farms in Canton at the time as her inspiration. The fresco took only several days to complete, which is how an artist like Rufus Porter worked during the mid-1800's.





Rufus Porter was born in Massachusetts in 1792 to a farm family. He became an itinerate artist in 1816, traveling throughout New England and the Mid-Atlantic states painting murals, landscapes and portraits. He was also a journalist, scientist and inventor. He invented a "camera obscura" which enabled him to make silhouette portraits in less than 15 minutes. He charged 20 cents apiece for them and they were highly popular.



However, it was his landscape murals that won him his fame. Subjects were dramatic settings in the style of the "Hudson River School" and were painted over mantles and on entire walls. From 1824 - 1845 he completed 150 murals. In 1845 he moved to New York City and became a journalist. He edited magazines such as the "Scientific American", "The New York Mechanic" and "The American Mechanic". He died in New Haven Connecticut in 1884.

This fresco was painted to illustrate another form of folk art popular during the 18th century and to illustrate the organization of typical farmsteads of that period as well.

Next to the fresco is a hall cupboard which is grain painted. Throughout the Bartlett-Travis house the moldings and doors were historically grain painted, but covered over with many layers of paint. This cabinet was the only remaining original grain painted item in the house. Unfortunately, it was accidentally painted during the finishing process. Karen Folk Thomas repainted the cupboard as it originally appeared. The look is that of Tiger Maple which was a popular look during the mid 1800's, and resembles the corner cupboard in the kitchen.

