

Photos: Keith Anderson

"Home is a name, a word, it is a strong one; stronger than magician ever spoke, or spirit ever answered to —"

*Charles Dickens*

*By Shannon Linden*

Clearly the famous English writer Charles Dickens held the concept of domicile close to his heart. While he penned his thoughts on the elusive power of home several decades before this 1922 house was built, the sentiment seems fitting for this river city residence.

**"Everything from the craftsmanship to the heating and plumbing was done with attention to quality and detail."**

The apple tree in the front yard is so old it no longer produces fruit, but inside, this heritage home is far from retired.

Located on Connaught Road (pronounced connot), this is the not-so-little house that could. Like any aging soul with good genes it has survived the changing times, growing when need be, evolving just enough, add-

ing a modern element here and there, to ultimately move through the years with dignity.

"This house is so solid," owner Jennifer Long says. "Everything from the craftsmanship to the heating and plumbing was done with attention to quality and detail."

Indeed, not much has been changed since the original home was constructed. Naturally, the electrical has been updated and modern appliances have been added to the kitchen, but a stroll through this welcoming home shows the early integrity endures.

The air is fragrant with blossoms, their sweet smelling petals floating free and dancing in the wind, decorating the lawn like celebratory confetti heralding spring, when I first visit.



The cement steps, bordered by lush lawn, are slightly steep as I climb to the top of the front yard, where wooden steps lead the way to the expansive veranda.

Round, strong columns, unique for Kamloops, particularly in the 1920s, stand proud upon the porch, which stretches the width of the house.

Crown moldings on the exterior window frames lend elegance to the otherwise casual porch, where a comfy couch sits in the corner, welcoming guests to relax and enjoy the north-facing view.

As soon as Jennifer opens the front door, I sense something special about this home. The entrance is small, but original features create a charming ambience. Coat hooks draped with family jackets lend a casual, welcoming feel while small, leaded glass windows offer peek-a-boo glimpses into the inglenook in the living room.

A second door swings open to usher guests into the living and dining rooms, where original dark oak floors exude rich warmth and nicely set off the dark-stained wood wainscoting, window frames, deep sills, baseboards, crown moldings and doors.

Ten-foot high-ceilings and a wall of windows, along with a single French door that opens out to the veranda, complete the slightly formal but convivial entertaining areas.

With natural light streaming through, the windows illuminate the gathering spaces.

Long comments that they are the original, multi-paned windows. "Multi-paned, indeed," she says with a smile. "Multiple pains in the you-know-what to clean!"

But, oh! Surely worth a little elbow grease when they lead the eyes to feast upon the view, where across the street, over the tops of houses, the river ripples and runs. Truly a Kamloops home, this house looks out at the view that inspired the city's name: the meeting place of the North and South Thompson rivers.

And like the water, the house has graceful movement to it.

"We looked at other heritage homes in the area," Long comments, "But this one had such an immediate flow and a feeling of family."



The Long's charming home on Connaught Road is tucked back from the street behind a sloping lawn and stone retaining walls.

It was always her dream to live in a heritage house. She and her husband Michael were residing in Rayleigh when they happened upon the Connaught Road place.

"We'd been looking but never found quite what we



were after," she says.

"When we went through this house, we told our kids (son, Adrian, and daughter, Emily) to walk down from St. Ann's, where they were going to school and have a look. They immediately rushed up the stairs to pick out their bedrooms. They fell in love with it."

Of particular appeal to Jennifer was the unique inglenook, a recessed area for a seat or bench beside the fireplace. It took her breath away. "My mom made the cushions," she explains, waving her hand over the floral patterned, padded cushions atop the old, wooden, pew-like benches that face one another like bookends, framing the fireplace.

"This is probably my favorite room," Long says.

"This house is gorgeous at Christmas. I hang a huge wreath over the fireplace and throw on a Presto log. It's magical."

Together, the living room — with its regal sitting area, spectacular fireplace and built-in bookshelf at the base of the staircase — and the dining room — with its high ceiling, open feel, and incredible view — are so elegant, I can't help but imagine a holiday party of old.

I envision the ladies, nearly 90 years ago, their lovely, long dresses dusting the wood floor as they swish about, carefully sipping drinks and endlessly chatting about goings-on in Kamloops.

And indeed, as the house was first constructed for George Wyllie Black, a lawyer, school trustee and president of both the Golf Club and the Operatic Society, the house was likely home to such glamorous events.

Previous owners have updated the house, but the Longs, living in it for the past six, have strived to keep changes to a minimum. They did, however, rip out the pink Berber carpet in the master bedroom to expose original fir flooring and they painted over the matching pink walls.

Interestingly, newer housing trends often place the master on the main, which is the case on Connaught, where the Longs set up a sunny master bedroom that overlooks the lovely backyard.

The room is spacious and inviting, although the modern homeowner (or certainly the shop-a-holic) might find the matching his and hers closets small by comparison to today's walk-ins.

Also missing is an ensuite. Instead, the bathroom bits are located in the hallway between the kitchen and the master. There are no fights over the facilities, however, as the big, old claw foot tub and the matching corner sink are located in one small room, while the loo is located in the water closet next door.

Carrying on into the kitchen, I swear I smell cinnamon as I daydream an apple pie cooling on the countertop or perhaps chewy cookies coming from the oven.

Truly the heart of the home, this room has a more modern, relaxed, family feel to it. The eating area is compact but cozy. Sunshine streams across the kitchen table as light from the backyard brings the outdoors in.

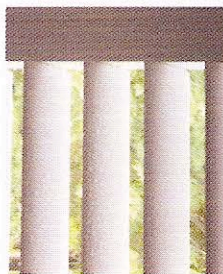


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The scene makes Jennifer smile wistfully as waves of nostalgia sweep her up in memories of shared family meals spent gazing out into the private backyard, where birds chatter and an array of flowers sway in the gentle breeze. Like every mother, she sees the growth of her children reflected in the evolution of her home.

"The yard was a labour of love," she says. "There was no garden when we moved in, but now we have perennial gardens in both the front and back of the house."

Like her young-adult children, the yard has matured, admirably growing in beauty and independence.

Tastefully updated in subtle, sunny colours, the kitchen blends nicely with the remainder of the house. The terracotta-coloured tiles and wood cabinets lend a warm but antique feel to the home.

Once the kitchen's only source of heat, the wood stove has been removed, the curved mark on the floor where it once stood atop a raised brick platform proof of its former existence.

Pocket doors separate the kitchen from the fabulous, galley-style pantry, where original wood counters and generous cabinetry remain. A small step off a side door features an old box where daily deliveries of fresh milk would have been made.

While the main floor showcases the era of this home, both the upper floor and the basement harbour great potential. Upstairs bedrooms and the bathroom were developed much later and thus have newer windows and electrical heating, but the dormer roof in the back bedroom and the jaw-dropping view from the delicate front bedroom veranda reflect a by-gone time.

In the unfinished basement, previous owners dug the ground down, creating nine-foot ceilings and installing radiant heating to warm the concrete floor and invite untold future development.

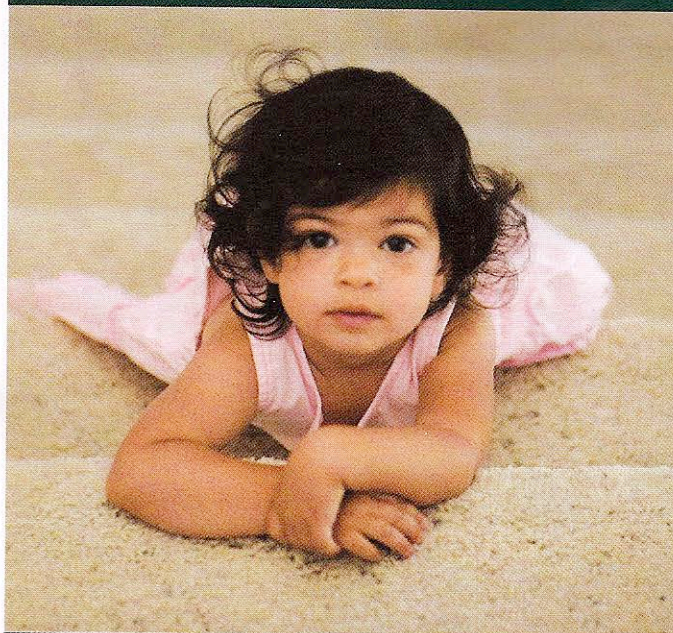
Leaving, I find my contemporary car's windshield polka-dotted with petals and I smile. The spirit of this heritage house lives on, whispering honour of the old and welcome of the new; embracing all that has been and all that is yet to come. ●

Top: Rich woodwork, paned windows and a ruby Persian carpet create a warm dining atmosphere.

Bottom: A glimpse of the back garden is visible through the multi-paned windows in the main floor master bedroom.



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