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Gothic Revival

Heritage restoration of 1860's home revealed deficiencies and structural issues

An historical renovation is the ultimate creative and technical challenge. Metaphorically, it is the Olympics of construction: a chance to demonstrate years of training and technique, and to showcase unique skills in an arena of technical constraints and management pressures.

Being good at this type of building requires innovation and patience, and access to experts who can make the vision come to life. When design team J. Glass & Associates set to work with contractor Design Spec Group to renovate an 1860's Gothic Revival-style home in Brampton, the entire team rallied around the project to leave their particular stamp of genius on every nook and cranny.

When the home was initially built, it was comprised of stucco on wood boards. Over 140 years later, the home was tested for energy efficiency and rated only 6 out of a possible 100 Energuide points. Naturally, addressing this deficiency was an issue of ensuring both comfort and economy.



Bay window seats required millwork genius to fit and finish properly.

Dark stain on wide pine-plank flooring is a dramatic departure from typical honey-coloured wood.

The plaster and trim were removed in order to insulate the house properly, while the original rope-and-pulley windows were fully restored by a heritage restoration sub-contractor. The ornate Victorian doors, door frames and baseboards were donated to Habitat for Humanity for use in restoring another 1860's heritage home. A tankless water heater and efficient furnace were installed to significantly improve the home's energy efficiency.

The homeowners had very stringent requirements that helped to keep the team on track and to establish irrevocable priorities. In order to be true to the style of period construction, no interior bulkheads were used to conceal mechanical or plumbing pipes.

Faced with the practical challenge of updating the home to modern standards, the construction team left the original exterior stucco and 2 x 4 balloon framing, and then painstakingly framed new interior and partition walls within the original framing. This enabled the building team to plumb, square and level every wall, corner and floor. They also created 18-inch thick walls on either side of the centre hall plan to run plumbing and mechanical pipes.

Amenities such as a home audio-visual system, full networking, security features, and on-demand hot water system and heat recovery ventilators were added in order to bring the house's function up to modern standards.





Treads, handrails, spindles and newel posts were custom built.

The original rope-and-pulley windows were fully restored by a heritage restoration sub-contractor.

The homeowner originally started planning a kitchen renovation that eventually expanded to encompass two-thirds of the house. As is most often the case with heritage work, many unanticipated deficiencies and structural issues were revealed once the walls were opened up, and eventually the reno encompassed the whole house. A structural engineer was called on site at least once or twice a week for the first few months in order to collaborate on how to effectively correct the issues.

The interior finishing included installing magnificent 10-inch-wide pine-plank flooring. A dark stain was chosen that was a dramatic departure from the light honey colour that is typical for this type of flooring. The darker colour choice posed the problem of potential striping as the planks expanded and contracted, so each tongue and groove was stained individually by hand.

Stunning stairs and railings were created, using custom treads, handrails, and custom lathed spindles and newel posts. The addition of custom bay window seats, which also provide pull-out storage, were clever innovations that required millwork genius in order to fit and finish properly.

Period wainscoting details, and laundry room and mudroom built-ins, were among the details that pulled the overall look and feel of the house together. Installing a full fireplace surround and mantle, designed and built to suit the her-





RESOURCES

DESIGN:
J Glass & Associates 905.823.3008
jglassandassociates.com

CONSTRUCTION:
Design Spec Group 905.760.2225
designspecgroup.com

WINDOW RESTORATION:
Roof Tile Management 905.672.9992
rooftilemanagement.com

PLUMBING DETAIL:
Archdekin Plumbing & Heating
905.451.2244 archdekin.ca

PLANK FLOORING:
Hoffmeyer's Mill 1.877.0GILVIE
hoffmeyersmill.on.ca

FLOORING INSTALLATION:
Design Spec Group 905.760.2225
designspecgroup.com

STAIRS AND RAILINGS:
Royal Oak Stair & Railing
905.853.5727
royaloakstair.ca

STUCCO REPAIR:
Nutek Stucco 416.881.4193

TRIM AND MOULDINGS:
Brenlo 1.877.816.6607
416.749.6857 brenlo.ca

itage period, entailed crafting corbels, pilasters, plinths and other elements from raw wood that was then hand carved and profiled on site.

The success of a project of this complexity rests with a synergistic balance being created between the homeowner, the design team, the building team and the many sub-trades who overlap and cooperate in order to bring ideas and dreams to life. The best teams are collaborative, applying their creativity to solving technical challenges and being willing to go the extra mile, even when it entails more time and effort.

While the project posed many challenges the final result is testimony to the team's combined efforts that will carry this house timelessly into the next century. ■



Amenities, such as on-demand hot water, were added to modernize the home.