



# A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING

## Canadian HOUSE & HOME

House and Home of the Month\_March 2006

*- excerpts from the text by Jennifer David*

Wanting to experience a different kind of home, one that could easily accommodate large family gatherings, yet still feel cosy when they're on their own, the couple began the house hunt that led them to this well-proportioned, semi-detached beauty six years ago. With the help of designer and builder Andrew Fee of SOMA Studio, who also advised them on the purchase, the couple launched into the substantial renovation that would both play up the architecture and history of the 1880's house, and improve on it in many ways.

Where the previous owner had restored the house from a down-at-the-heels boarding establishment to a single family home, the current owners sought to restore it to the grandeur of its era by adding traditional elements like elaborate crown mouldings, pilasters, baseboards, handsome panel-moulded walls and fireplace mantels and other classical architectural flourishes. To relieve congestion and allow for a generous table in the kitchen, which was dramatically remodelled, they extended the house two feet at the back, and added a covered porch.

*"In a house full of collections, there isn't a thing out of place"*

The home's five bathrooms were renovated, and the basement dug down two feet and finished from stem to stern - complete with a well-equipped gym and a second kitchen (a boon come entertaining time). And on the main floor, a makeshift room divider was removed to create a dramatic 15-by-30-foot library/dining room. The couple retained the oak flooring, refinishing it with a deep walnut stain, and updated the ceilings with discreet recessed lighting.

Perhaps, most importantly, the owners wished to capitalize on the scale of the rooms by incorporating built-in features to house their vast library of books and other collections. "I hate it when things don't have a place. I don't like clutter," says one of the owners, "so it was important for me to take advantage of the opportunity to create places for things."





Despite his own modernist leanings, Fee proved masterful not only at imposing the appropriate sense of age and elegance in the house, but in blending old with new, and seamlessly incorporating the kind of built-in storage and display space that a book-loving Victorian could only dream of. Almost every room in the house, from the master bedroom to the family room and third-floor offices now boasts beautifully detailed accommodation for books, linens, clothing, audiovisual equipment and various *objets*. In a house full of collections, there isn't a thing out of place.

In some places, like the main-floor powder room, where the renovation unearthed a brick wall that once featured a door, Fee was able to recess the cabinetry, thereby retaining valuable floor space. Such well-considered and economical use of space is the envy of any homeowner who feels they're drowning in stuff. But even so, it begs the question: is it possible to have too much of a good thing?

According to Fee, the answer is yes. "You can have too many built-ins. There has to be a comfortable balance between furniture, what the homeowners require for storage, and what the architecture will allow for storage." And, he cautions, in their rush to instill order, many new homeowners go overboard with built-ins, forgetting that, in a year or two, they may acquire new furniture or art that begs for wall space.

Here, however, Fee achieved just the right balance.

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