

# A place IN TIME

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PHOTOGRAPHY **GORDON KING**



This stately stone manor is one of the oldest homes in Nepean, but has contemporary accents to keep it current. **OPPOSITE TOP RIGHT:** Semi-elliptical transom windows are one of the key components of Loyalist architecture, seen here over the front door. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** This plaque displays the Heritage Property designation granted by the city of Ottawa.

Usually, house hunters build a wish list and then set off on their journey to choose a home that fits their needs. Once in a rare while, a home chooses its owners instead.

That's how Martin Clarke and Jane Curry came to be owners of this utterly charming stone manor home in Fallowfield Village. The home was built in 1828 by New England millwright, James Smith. It's one of the oldest homes in Nepean and is designated a heritage home. At one point in time, it was considered as a site for the Nepean museum. The gravity of owning a heritage home isn't lost on Jane and Martin, who felt instantly drawn to this house upon their first viewing. Well beyond falling for the insouciant charm that comes with original historical detail, they were taken with the notion of being the next

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The stone fireplace is likely where most of the cooking was done when the home was built. The door next to the fireplace is where water would have been fetched in pots to cook over the fire. **BELOW:** Deep windowsills are the perfect perch for family felines Archer and Kirk.



Glass bottles collected from the property over the years provide authentic décor in the kitchen.



generation of caretakers, but not without pausing to realize the responsibility that comes with it. They are homeowners who will write the next chapter in this home's story.

Many original features remain, like a stone fireplace in the kitchen, saddle hooks in the basement, a semi-elliptical transom over the front door (which was indicative of the period) and a stone fence that runs in the front of the property.

There are clues to the past everywhere. The original doorways of this home are short and wide, likely to accommodate the average shorter stature and wide skirts that were in fashion a couple of centuries ago. Window sills throughout the home are extremely deep, which would have promoted maximum airflow and daylight, keeping in mind this home wouldn't have had electricity for many years.

There is a real sense that the home belongs not only to Martin and Jane, but to the community as well. For instance, local artist **Richard Pell** knocked on their front door

and asked to paint a portrait of their home. His lovely watercolour is a reminder of the significance of this home. It hangs in Jane and Martin's basement.

Jane and Martin feel a kinship with the owners who held the home directly before them. There are elements of the previous homeowner's décor in the home to this day, including an arrangement of antique glass bottles, which had been collected on the property over time.

Martin and Jane have, like previous homeowners, put their own personal stamp on this home. They have been very conscious of "maintaining the look and feel" of the home's history, says Martin. In many cases, this meant leaving design and décor untouched.

For example, the rich, dark staircase at the entryway presents a pleasing colour contrast, but is well-worn after over a century of use. Martin and Jane say the worn treads of that staircase were high on the list of repairs and refurbishment from other house hunters who saw the home, according to the sellers' realtor.

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Rough-hewn logs and saddle hooks remain in the lower level, where livestock would have been housed on a dirt floor. Today it is a comfy entertainment space. **TOP LEFT:** Martin and Jane fell in love immediately with this well-worn staircase. **TOP RIGHT:** The formal dining room marries elements of its past with current day refinements.



feature



Jane says, “We really loved that there were 190 years of treads. How many people have been up and down this staircase over the years? The staircase was something that some wanted to change, but not us.”

Martin agrees, “Anything old, we wanted to keep.”

One of the first things that they did was not to the home itself, but to an old oak tree that sits on the property. They got it recognized as a heritage tree by Forests Ontario, which will

protect it as a 250-300-year-old white oak.

They updated kitchen appliances (**Corbeil Appliances**) and fixtures (**A-Team Plumbers**). They did some work in the garage (garage floor by **Tailored Living**; insulation, drywall and painting by **Newfound Homes**).

It is this home’s stunning backyard with an award-winning garden (**Yards Unlimited** by Designer **Stephanie Scott**) where Jane and Martin have really made their mark.

This garden was designed in the context of the home’s history, incorporating stone and plant life that would give it an English garden feel, true to the Loyalist period. According to **Ian Stewart**, president of Yards Unlimited, inspiration for Jane and Martin’s garden very much had to do with point of view.

“We had to build a landscape to suit the style of the home, as well as how Jane and Martin wanted to use their garden. In addition to the ground-level patio, they have

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**TOP LEFT:** Light passes easily through the hallways, due to clever construction. **ABOVE:** The bedrooms feature sloped ceilings, another architectural marker of the period. **LEFT:** Jane and Martin relax with a glass of wine in their beautiful garden.

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A photograph of a large house at night, illuminated by warm lights. The house has a prominent chimney and a covered porch.

A photograph of a spiral staircase with a white railing and a black metal balustrade.

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**ABOVE:** Jane and Martin desired a garden that looked like it had always been there, using plants that are native to Canada. **CIRCLE:** Martin and Jane enjoy all kinds of wildlife in their garden. **MIDDLE:** The lower seating area is a lovely way to experience the serenity of the garden close up. **RIGHT:** This garden was award-winning for Yards Unlimited.

a large upper deck on their home where they spend a lot of time. The orientation of the deck really pushed the design, as we had to keep in mind that the garden would be viewed from above as well,” says Ian. The solution was to “build a garden that had movement, texture and changed with the season.”

The slope of the yard might have been a challenge for some, but with this garden it presented an opportunity. “The slope allowed for the unique water feature, with a stream, a waterfall and a pond that draws the wildlife,” says Ian.

Martin and Jane agree that the ruggedness of the water features add multiple vantage points that not only enhance their viewing pleasure, but are a boost to the local ecosystem. Martin and Jane are both avid scuba divers and water lovers, so a water feature was a must.

When you think about all the quiet moments that unfold in a home over time, and that this home has seen so many of those moments, it is quite humbling. This is a home that you need to spend time in unhurriedly to fully consider the weight of its history. **OH**





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