



Mirella Marshall and Mandy Sedgwick

PRESERVING HISTORY

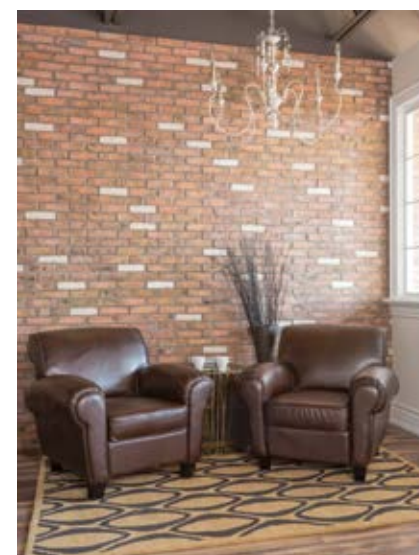
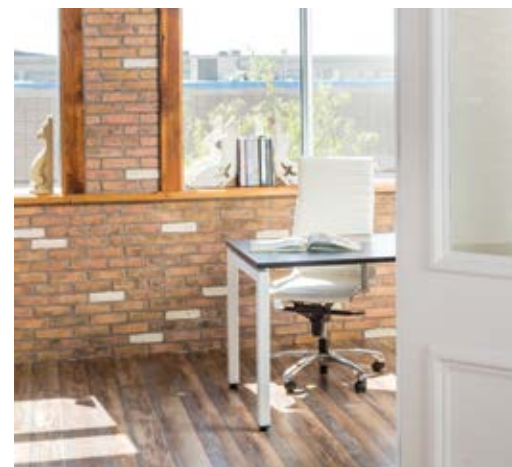
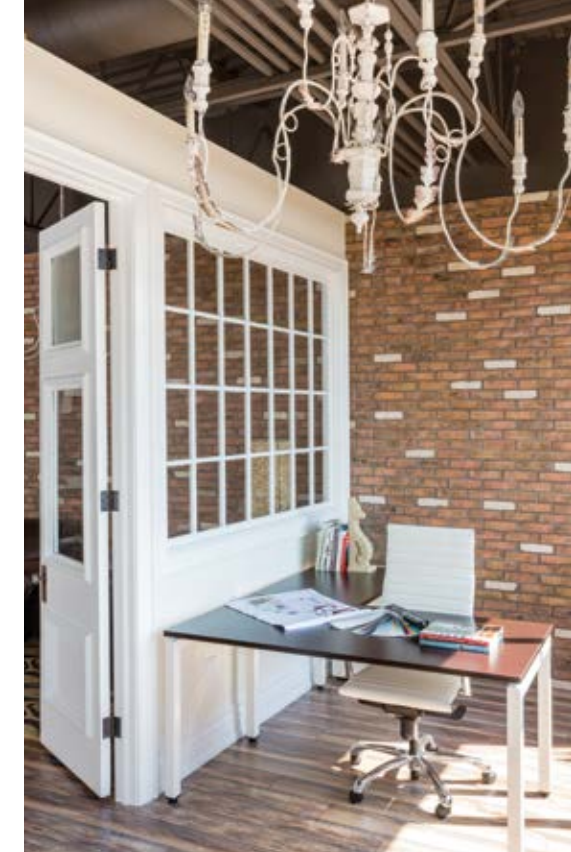
STORY **JOYCE TURNER-GIONET** | PHOTOGRAPHY **JASON HARTOG**



The first thing you need to know about Mandy Sedgwick and Mirella Marshall is they love what they do! Their company, **Sedgwick Marshall Heritage Homes**, restores century homes. That's just part of their business. They also tackle renovations and new builds from the ground up, and they are licensed real estate agents. Talk about multi-taskers.

The two met during the restoration of Milton's Waldie Blacksmith Shop. Mandy chaired the project. "We were both passionate about preserving old places, so once the project was complete, we realized that we loved what we were doing, and decided this was the career we were going to pursue," reveals Mirella. Mandy's strengths are logistics: lining up the trades, scheduling jobs and managing the financial side. Mirella took the lead on design, decorating and finishing. Though they each have their strengths, nothing is carved in stone. Their roles regularly overlap. "Partnerships are not always easy," says Mirella. "We leave our egos at the door and work together as a team. We laugh a lot." Mandy adds, "Mirella and I have different tastes, but it's the combination of ideas that seems to work."

They're fearless. Venturing into the construction business with limited experience, they've built Sedgwick Marshall into a respected brand. They're the "go-to girls" for builders who find a century home



sitting in the path of new construction. Sedgwick Marshall is the 9-1-1 line to move, rather than demolish, an old home.

That's how the business started – with a demolition. Though the Ontario Heritage Act came into effect in 1975, in the year 2000, many century homes were demolished to make way for suburbs. Mandy and Mirella loathed the idea that the links to the past would become part of the landfill. They took action.

They don't just talk the talk. Both live in century homes. Mirella's 1850s stone farmhouse is her dream home. She's lived there 38 years. "No ghosts," she answers the curious question. "None that I've ever seen." Their first project was a semidetached home built in 1910. They took the job on with a few trades. Within eight weeks, they'd renovated it. There wasn't a lot of heavy construction, it was mostly updating and they were hands-on. "We still get our hands dirty once in a while," Mirella laughs. Now, they work with a strong team of trades. The plan was to buy one house a year and renovate it so that when finished, it would last another 100 years. "My favourite part of the job is seeing the transformation from tired old house to fresh new house," says Mandy.

In their new office space on Bronte Street South, old meets new. "We needed a place to show clients what we do," says Mirella. The space is modern-meets-Mandy-and-Mirella. Open ductwork is painted Benjamin Moore

Willow and floors are a distressed laminate. Victorian French doors separate the office and meeting space. A find in a salvage yard, the doors retain their original glass and brass hardware. Closet doors adorned with the original porcelain knobs are from a home torn down on Highway 25. The meeting area's beautiful island boasts a vintage pine top made by master carpenter Manuel, using salvaged wood from a previous project. Using salvaged barn board, he also created striking glossy window trim. Fresh white cabinetry with stainless hardware is a modern touch. Three white, iron chandeliers, each slightly different, add whimsy. "The space reflects our design philosophy," says Mirella. "When we build new, we always incorporate century features for character and warmth."

Clients often say the two have dream jobs. Maybe so; but a dream built with a lot of hard work and perseverance. They recall a summer night 15 years ago. They'd been stripping old floors and at two in the morning were sitting on the verandah, happy but exhausted. "Can you imagine if one day this turns out to be a successful business?" Their "one day" has arrived. The wonderful thing about Sedgwick Marshall is not simply that it's creating beautiful spaces to call home. Mandy and Mirella are preserving a little of Ontario's history, and that's something we should all be happy about. **OH**