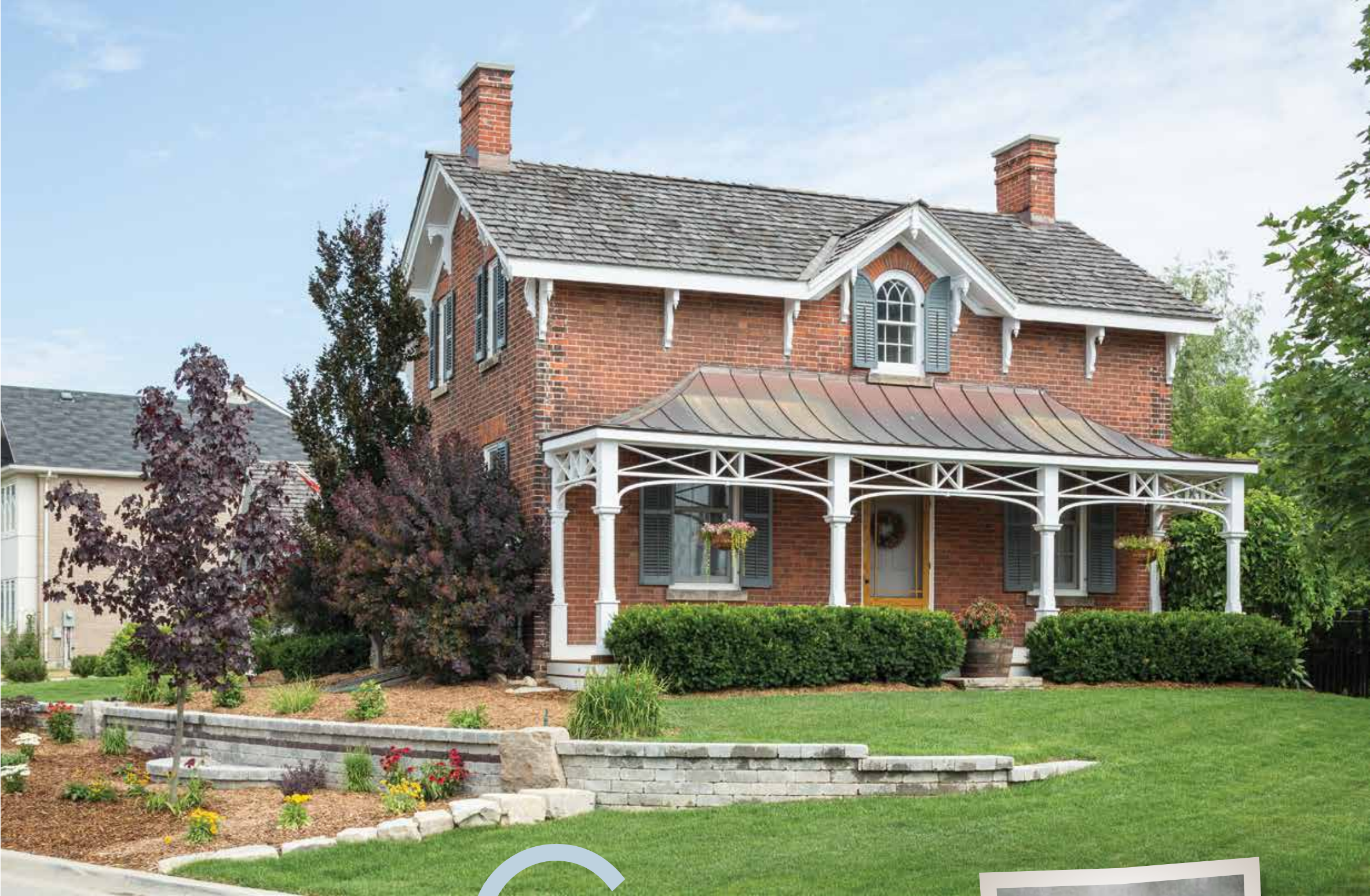


BELOW: Ken and Kate White stand by the original front door. **RIGHT:** Beautifully preserved, the 1830s home was able to remain in its original location. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** An old photo captures the farmhouse in days gone by.



Ghostly apparitions floating in the centre gable’s elliptical cathedral window. A root cellar where the sound of dragging chains can be heard on stormy nights. An 1830s cast-iron front doorbell that rings at odd moments. Tiny original cupboards, built into walls, low to the ground, hiding shocking secrets from the past. Of course, we’re totally kidding!

Continued on page 31



ALTON VILLAGE *historic home*

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



ABOVE: The original bell tower looks right at home within the addition and the garage. Cedar shakes tie the original home and the addition together. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Shutters were painted a heritage green to honour the home's original time period. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The home's columns and trellis work provide distinctive curb appeal.



We hate to disappoint those of you who crave a good ghost story, but according to homeowners Kate and Ken White, things are fairly quiet at the historic Thomas Alton Farmstead in Alton Village. However, the property is not without its stories. Legend has it that during the 1837 Upper Canada Rebellion, William Lyon Mackenzie King took refuge at the farmhouse while fleeing from colonial officers. Thomas Alton and his neighbours, guns in hand, fended off Tories who were searching for Mackenzie.

Thomas Alton arrived in Nelson Township in 1819 and soon caught the eye of Charlotte Cleaver, whose father, John Cleaver had won 200 acres of land in the 1806 land lottery of Nelson Township (present day Dundas Street, Walker's Line and No. 1 Sideroad). They married in 1822, and Thomas was able to purchase land from his father-in-law in the 1830s. The Alton farmhouse was built in stages, evidenced by two courses of brick walls; the first runs down the centre of the house. This was typical for the era, families added on as money and time allowed. Although there is no official record or cornerstone to corroborate the build date, Kate's research suggests the Cleaver/Altons started the house in the 1830s and finished it sometime between 1857 and 1863. Thomas and Charlotte had a staggering number of children – 16 in total. *Continued on page 32*



The original fireplace still warms the main floor on a cold evening.



ABOVE: Furnishings, like the harvest table, help preserve the home's period feel. **LEFT:** The modern kitchen meets farmhouse with a brick-style backsplash and antique-washed cabinetry.



ABOVE: The spacious sitting room is alive with character, from the wide plank floors to the deep mouldings. Artwork by Kate's aunt, Roberta Patterson, graces the walls. **RIGHT:** The original doors, hardware and window trim still shine. **OPPOSITE:** Family heirlooms are at home in this space.



The inspiration behind the naming of the village has never been clarified, but considering the sheer number of Altons and Alton descendants in the area, Alton Village seems to be an appropriate choice.

In 2006, Mattamy Homes broke ground on the modern Alton Village community. The old farmhouse was part of the land tract. During development, century homes are typically put on a trailer and moved to a new location. Not this one. It sits exactly where it sat in the 1800s – formerly 4059 Dundas Street, now 3215 Settlement Court – Mattamy simply built the pretty little village of Alton around it. The property received official heritage designation in 2007 when it was purchased by Alan and Janea VanderGaag, who spent countless hours restoring it, culminating in a restoration heritage award in 2009.

Excerpts from Alton Heritage House Restoration journal read, “The farmhouse derives its historical value through its association with the 19th century agricultural development and settlement of Nelson Township... an excellent example of a 1.5 storey three-bay Ontario vernacular farmhouse with both Regency and Gothic elements (modified L-plan). The red Flemish bond brick building with brick voussoirs and stone sills has a low-pitched roof with a centre gable and slightly projecting eaves... The main central entrance has a flat transom with moulded wood trim... Wood brackets with drop pendants support a boxed cornice...”

Very few major structural changes were made to the house before Kate and Ken moved in, with the exception of the original summer kitchen, which was torn down to allow for an addition that included a bathroom/laundry room, office and double-car garage. Walls were taken down in the kitchen to create a great room. The north stairway leading to the attic (housekeeper's quarters) was reconfigured. As Ken says, “the home's original footprint hasn't changed, space is simply used differently.” Wood trim and front and rear wood-burning fireplaces are all original. Most doors are painted and a few display dark mahogany inlay work. All doors retain their original hardware.

“People think owning a home with a heritage designation means things must stay exactly the same, but that's not quite true,” says Kate. You keep things similar, but it's not always possible to keep them the same. Take the windows. The original wide stone sills remain and frames and lintels were refinished, but the windows are modern, custom-made by Jeld-Wen to match the 1830s style: all-wood sash inserts in a double-hung, six-over-six configuration with divided-light muntins. In keeping with the time period, they are single pane – a modern energy panel solves the problem of heat loss. Most of the shutters are original, refinished in a historic green that reflects the period.

Ken redid the roof in rough-hewn red-cedar shakes in a dove grey, purchased from **Pacific Cedar**. “In the 1830s, shakes would probably have been white pine, but there's no significant aesthetic difference and cedar will wear better and last longer,” says Ken. He also added the pièce de résistance to the bell tower over the garage roof – a No. 2 cast-iron dinner bell in a crystal metal cradle that he sourced on Kijiji. “In 1830, when family and



farmhands were out in the field, the bell would summon them for meals. In the early 1900s, the advent of the tractor eventually made the bell redundant. Tractors moved so far from the farm, the driver couldn't hear the bell,” says Ken.

The home's front veranda features a bell-cast copper roof supported by chamfered columns, dressed up with Regency-period

trellis work. In 2014, Ken noticed rot in some of the columns. Working with Bill Blake of **Blake Custom Carpentry**, the two replaced deck boards and the framing. The south-facing veranda would have been the traditional front entrance to the home where one could see visitors coming from Dundas Street. Fast forward to 2016 and the Whites enter through the great room, off the driveway. *Continued on page 36*

feature



A claw-foot tub is the perfect addition in the boys' bathroom.



Playtime gets creative with a playhouse Ken built to resemble the farmhouse. The couple's sons Andrew (left) and Brian (far right) enjoy time with friends Saje, Kyera and Ryan. **ABOVE LEFT:** What used to be the master is now a little boy's bedroom. **ABOVE:** Splashes of colour make for a light, cheery space to slumber. **LEFT:** A telescope is tucked into an alcove at the top of the stairs where the boys' rooms are located so they can look at the stars.

ECLIPSE
SHUTTERS

livin' in style
decorativedreams
Shades ♦ Shutters ♦ Drapery & Décor

Easy to Clean • Energy Efficient • 25-year Warranty

905.878.6834

Showroom located at
1230 Main St. East, Milton, ON L9T 8M7

www.decorativedreams.com

IN SUPPORT OF
SickKids
FOUNDATION



ULTIMATE
Satin
FINISH

Fine Oak Things

YOUR NEW DINING TABLE AWAITS. . .

Customize Your Future Family Heirlooms at Fine Oak Things.



Order by
October 10th to
Ensure Delivery
by Christmas

- Handcrafted From Solid Wood To Fit Your Home
- Quality, Long Lasting Finishes To Suit Any Décor
- Styled For Today; Constructed For Life

43 Main Street South
Campbellville, Milton ON
(South of the 401 on Guelph Line)
905.854.0649

Fine Oak Things
www.fineoakthings.com



1.800.265.2290



**GOLDEN
WINDOWS**
LIMITED

VISIT ONE OF OUR SHOWROOMS AT:

888 GUELPH ST., KITCHENER, ON | 519.579.3810
309 EXETER RD., LONDON, ON | 519.652.1677
1112 MARCH RD., KANATA, ON | 613.592.9111

ENJOY THE VIEW

QUALITY & PRIDE BUILT INTO EVERY WINDOW

LOCALLY MANUFACTURED SINCE 1961





LEFT: The master bathroom was an addition to what was once the housekeeper's quarters in the attic space. **BELOW:** The bedroom is sweet simplicity with a curved headboard and pillows by Blackcatmeow Designs.



The original kitchen is long gone, upscaled with beautiful crown moulding, granite countertops, modern stainless faucets and custom cabinetry, including slide-out spice drawers and double pot drawers with slow-release hinges. All elements that would have made the life of a pioneer woman a hundred times easier.

In the great room, the built-in curio cabinet was originally a door, sealed off. “Ken’s a visionary,” says Kate. “He sees the possibilities in things, such as working with the original architecture to turn lost space into something beautiful.”

Originally the housekeeper’s quarters, Ken converted the attic into a huge master with en suite. He removed the original roof and installed a barn-style, board-and-batten dormer with copper eaves and trim sourced from **SPAR-Marathon Roofing Supplies**. He added a **Velux** skylight that closes automatically when it senses rain. The en suite’s pocket doors would have been a style completely at home in a Victorian house.

Kate and Ken have furnished the house in a way that respects and reflects its heritage. The eight-foot, square-nailed pine plank floors are dressed with colourful wool rugs. In the great room, an oak harvest table is flanked by distressed wood benches. Prints on the wall and many of the lights are heirlooms from

Kate and Ken’s own heritage. In the living room, the piano, commissioned by Kate’s great grandfather in 1901 from Guelph’s Bell Piano and Organ Company, looks spectacularly at home. One element that had to be removed was the dated wallpaper. “Generations of Altons had resulted in over 500 yards of hideous stuff,” laughs Ken.

A heritage home is not for everyone. Perhaps you need a bit of the pioneer spirit

to take on its challenges. However, contrary to what many people think, a heritage designation does come with benefits. Kate calls it “conservation through cooperation,” with property tax rebates, access to Ontario’s heritage grant program and heritage advisory services. Currently, Burlington has 70 heritage designated properties. Oakville has 500 individually designated properties as well as entire heritage designated districts. **OH**





INFINITY
KITCHENS

Factory Custom Fine Cabinetry

You Dream It – We Will Make It.

Come Home To Perfection.



3D DESIGN
CUSTOM KITCHENS | CLOSETS | WALL UNITS

647.378.3669
Infinitykitchens.ca | Info@infinitykitchens.ca

Shakespeare would be in Love with Downie Lofts



Old World Charm With New World Comfort
Luxury Residential Condos
In Downtown Stratford

Juliet Balconies • Stunning Lofts
Exposed Beam • Original Brick • Elevator
Fibre Optics • Secure Entrance
Overlooking the Avon Theatre

Let Us Entertain You On A Personal Tour
Contact John & Terri Hart
Peak Realty Ltd. Brokerage
519.272.4865 • 519.874.1999