

A Treasure RESTORED

BY JUDE WAYLAND // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY

You never know what treasures lurk behind the walls of your home, as custom homebuilders and renovators Craig Macpherson and Valerie Kritsch recently discovered while renovating their Century home in the heart of Collingwood.

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Pocket doors open to the living room, where a super high-efficiency wood stove warms the space.

LEFT: Three-year-old Maiah draws on an easel tucked into the corner of the dining room. The Macpherson home is a family home.

The living room opens up to the dining room, where a restored Maria Theresa chandelier hangs brilliantly over the table. The furniture is a wonderful mix of new and old.

home & builder

On June 27, 1959, a 12-year-old girl secretly slipped a time capsule into the wall of her Collingwood home. It contained a letter, two pocket calendars and a lucky four-leaf clover.

Fifty years to the day the letter was penned, Craig uncovered the time capsule nestled in a wall of their historic home. The couple tracked down the owner, who had been battling cancer for six years. She was delighted to be reunited with her keepsakes, and two days later, a CT scan miraculously revealed no trace of cancer. A twist of fate? Or the remarkable power of a lucky charm?

Craig and Valerie have three young girls of their own. To continue the tradition, the Macpherson girls, with help from Mom, wrote their own letter and, along with a little red shoe once belonging to the twins, tucked a time capsule into the wall of their home. Who knows at what magical moment these treasures will be unearthed?

Such are the unexpected pleasures of renovating an old home. Craig and Valerie, both natives of Ontario, met and started a family in Whistler, B.C., where they operated a successful custom homebuilding business. After selling their energy-efficient, Georgie award-winning home, the search for a new abode proved to be quite the challenge. Surfing online, Craig found a gem of a home... in Collingwood. So, with three babies in tow, the two entrepreneurs returned east. Much to the delight of their families, **Macpherson Fine Homes Inc.** set up shop in Collingwood.

Upon their arrival, the couple tackled the daunting task of revamping their tired old house and restoring its original beauty. "This classic American four-square home was full of potential," says Valerie, "and the vision came to us very quickly."

Typical of century homes, there were too many walls and small rooms on the main floor. The first thing Val and Craig did was open up the space. "The main floor wasn't a total gut as we wanted to preserve some of the original architectural elements of the home," explains Craig. "Even original lathe and plaster walls are beautiful once restored. We did, however, reconfigure many of the walls on both floors and replaced what was necessary."

What was once an outdated, cold and cramped three-storey house is now a bright, spacious 3,650 sq. ft. dwelling showcasing the beauty of the original design.

An Eco-Energy audit was done to identify areas of air leakage and energy efficiency improvements to be made. Remarkably, the original wood-framed, double-hung windows were found to be airtight. Only one window required replacing. The old windows and trim, were, however, rebuilt, rehung, and counterweights restrung to replace broken cords – a labour-intensive undertaking. The audit was useful, and was found to be an economical tool to use. Substantial basement and attic insulation upgrades were done to improve energy efficiency, as was the upgraded boiler unit and fireplace inserts. *Continued on page 58*



ABOVE: A small, dark kitchen has been transformed into a large, open concept living area with Caesarstone countertops and timeless, custom, vanilla cabinetry.

FAR LEFT: Val and Craig have worked tirelessly restoring their century home in Collingwood. They moved back home from British Columbia to raise their family and continue building award-winning homes.

LEFT: The girls have their own table tucked into the corner of the large dining room, just off the kitchen. It's the perfect place to enjoy a snack.

SOURCE GUIDE

McKee Kitchens, Macdonald's Countrywide, Di Pietra Design, Georgian Design Centre, B&R Hearth and Geothermal, Patrick Mahon, Bill Brown Building Supplies, Ashton's.



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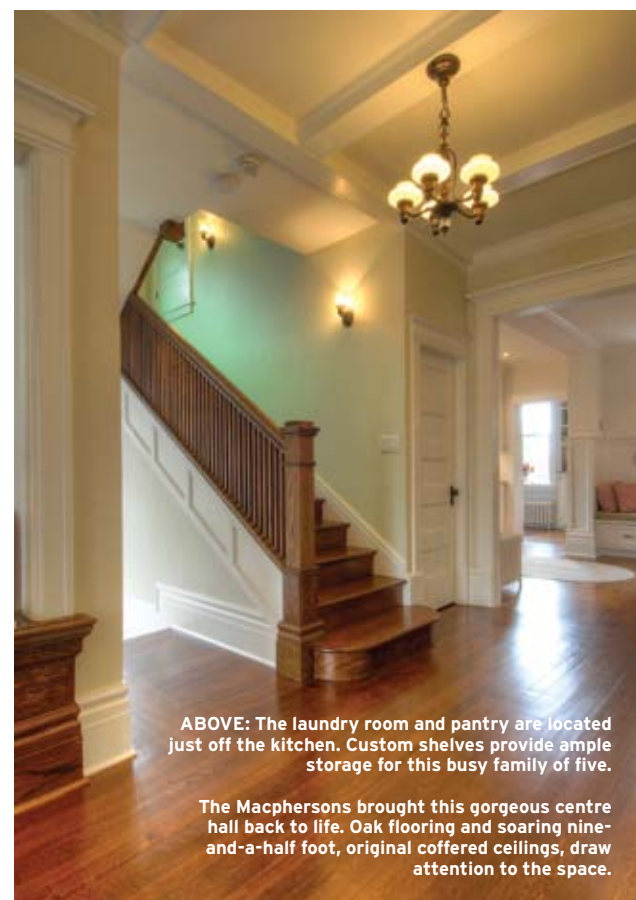
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ABOVE: The laundry room and pantry are located just off the kitchen. Custom shelves provide ample storage for this busy family of five.

The Macphersons brought this gorgeous centre hall back to life. Oak flooring and soaring nine-and-a-half foot, original coffered ceilings, draw attention to the space.

All three fireplaces were in rough shape. **B&R Hearth & Geothermal** installed an airtight, super high efficiency Jotul wood stove insert in the living room and a gas insert in what was once the parlour. A wood-burning fireplace in the master bedroom was rebuilt.

Val replaced timeworn and outdated lighting fixtures with restored antique hanging chandeliers and wall sconces. The dining room showcased a sparkling Maria Theresa chandelier and sconces to match. Furniture is a collection of old pieces with new – some of which have been across the country and back – while others came from local vendors, city shops, antique markets and family. Window coverings and bench seat upholstery in the dining room and kitchen come from **Ashton's** in Thornbury.

Craftsman-style pocket doors lead from the front entrance to the living room, which features maple hardwood flooring, gorgeous stained glass windows, and soaring nine-and-a-half foot ceilings adorned with an original coffered ceiling. A bold painting of a buffalo sits atop a handcrafted mantel by **McKee Kitchens**.

You never know what you will find in a house that dates back to 1903. Craig discovered multiple layers of flooring, from parquet and linoleum, to carpeting and quarter-sawn oak. In one area, the subflooring was an inch higher than elsewhere; it was removed and dropped an inch. “The house underwent about five or six renovations since it was built, making it difficult to know what was done when,” says Craig.

Thanks to Craig's carpentry know-how, the couple preserved the original oak floor in the entryway, laid a herring-boned maple floor in the dining area to match the living room flooring, and created a seamless join with help from Benjamin Moore's Sherwood stain colour. Craig also re-built the crumbling colonnade pillars and wood bases leading into the parlour. Walls were treated using eco-friendly low-VOC paints from Benjamin Moore and C2 with thanks to local painter **Patrick Mahon** and his crew. Stair railings and baseboards were meticulously milled and reproduced by **Bill Brown Building Supplies** and were installed and built by Craig himself. *Continued on page 60*

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The master bedroom has a rebuilt wood-burning fireplace and a walk-in closet leading to the en suite. His-and-her armoires add character to the room.

ABOVE LEFT: The girls, Leah, Maiah and Alexandra, jump on Mom and Dad's bed.

ABOVE RIGHT: Old homes lacked storage. Craig and Val added custom cabinetry in the master en suite, along with a beautiful glass shower.



Back in Whistler-Pemberton, Macpherson Fine Homes specialized in building custom high-end log and timber frame homes. A hands-on carpenter by trade, Craig still spends about 50 per cent of his time wearing a tool belt. Overseeing renovation and custom home projects from start to finish keeps him very busy the rest of his time.

Says Val, "We have a reputation for building green, hiring locally and using local products wherever possible. We offer high quality workmanship and put energy efficiency first."

At the top of their list was the installation of a quiet, environmentally friendly heating system (B&R Hearth & Geothermal), which allows four zones to be set at different temperatures throughout the home. Says Craig, "The gas boiler system has no bulkheads, no ductwork to hide or box in, and it provides clean, even heat. We kept all the old cast iron rads, but replumbed and reconditioned them all down into this new boiling system."

Adds Val: "This system also does our hot water. There's no hot water tank. It's amazing technology. It's clean, it's high-tech, it's efficient. We looked into geothermal, but it wasn't cost effective."

The "green" focus extends to the home's three bathrooms, fitted with low flush toilets and low water usage showerheads and faucets by **Grohe (Georgian Design Centre)**.

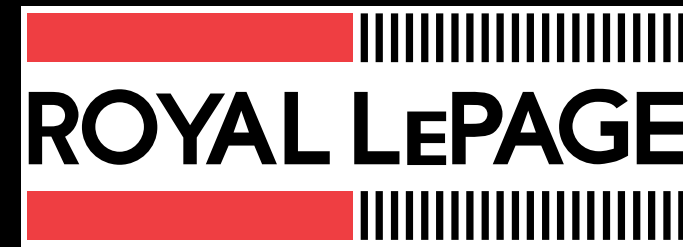
A small, dark kitchen is now an open-concept kitchen-dining room, divided by an island featuring a Caesarstone countertop, a manmade product that requires no sealing (**Di Pietra Design**), and a functional, built-in window seat. "Craig and I designed the kitchen, pantry and built-ins with the input from our cabinet maker **Jason McKee** of **McKee Kitchens**. McKee then constructed and installed the finished product," Val says. The LG appliances were purchased at **Macdonald's Countrywide Furniture and Appliances**. A deep, stainless farmhouse sink was sourced in London, Ontario.

The kitchen leads to the practical pantry-laundry room with plenty of storage space, and raised countertops, keeping that elusive candy jar just out of reach.

This enterprising couple is quite the dynamic duo. Not only is Val a fulltime mother of three, she also juggles interior design work, and sources materials and products for Craig's projects, as well as a full-time job overseeing contractors and trades at **The Shipyards**.

Now that Val the visionary and Craig the hands-on builder have lovingly and impeccably restored their stately, four-bedroom century home to its original splendour, chances are that Macpherson Fine Homes will be in great demand for years to come. **OH**

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