



HOME WITH A *history*

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FRESH FLOWERS **PINK POPPI**

Too often, people forget the homes they live in have histories. They've been through a lot, grown and changed over time, just like we do.

Danielle Benning and Martin Rawlinson not only acknowledge that about their home, but they embrace it. As the owners of **Cornerstone Home Interiors**, they are passionate about interesting and beautiful furniture and décor from around the



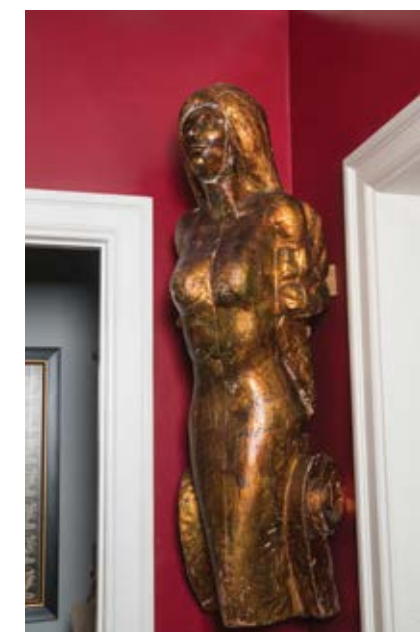
OPPOSITE TOP: An expanded porch is all this home needed to update its facade. **BOTTOM:** Danielle Benning and Martin Rawlinson undertook their home's renovation knowing some thorough research, careful planning and lots of love would be the ingredients needed to pull it together. **RIGHT:** A long dining table for 10 serves as the family's everyday table. **BELOW:** An antler chandelier and a large model ship are just two of the interesting pieces in the foyer. **MIDDLE:** Danielle and Martin aren't afraid to decorate with black, especially where light pours in from large front windows. **RIGHT:** This figurehead from the front of a ship is not the only one of its kind in the home. Nautical pieces grace many different corners and tables.

world. They are drawn to pieces that tell stories, and the same goes for their homes.

The couple, who previously owned a converted church in Cambridge, have now found their "forever home" elsewhere in town. It tells a great story – one they continue to learn more about the longer they live there.

It was important to Danielle to know her home's life story, so she researched it as best she could. Not only did she find the names of some of the previous owners, but she found a photo of the original home in the Toronto Public Library archives.

"I think if this house could talk, it would be very interesting," says Danielle. Built in 1898, it was first owned by an established local business owner. Danielle has heard people around town speak fondly of it, recounting memorable parties and events hosted there over many years. *Continued on page 38*





Later in its life, the 8,000 sq. ft. home was divided into six separate apartments. So many unnecessary walls had been built to split the space into rental units that as soon as they took possession, Martin walked around with a hammer and started taking them down.

Besides the extra walls, “the house had such great bones,” says Danielle, and they were fortunate to focus only on updating its aesthetics. The right shades of paint set the tone for each space. “You go through several iterations before you get it where you want it,” says Danielle, who loves to swap out furniture and play around with décor.

The couple tried to make the footprint work for them without changing it too much while also restoring the layout close to its original state. But just because it’s a large space doesn’t mean it doesn’t get used.

“This is a warm house even though it’s a big house,” says Danielle. “It has an unexpected cosiness.”

Danielle says having a small kitchen (with new, functional and efficient appliances from **Jonas TV & Appliances**) is a blessing in disguise because it forces the family to eat in the dining room even when they don’t have guests.

Outside, Martin and Danielle expanded the porch so it extends across the whole front and just around the side where it connects to a patio. It continues down to the side yard and to their new swimming pool and hot tub, installed by **Terry Howald Pools**, surrounded by a wall that encloses the space.

Inside, they created the perfect space for everyone and everything.



OPPOSITE TOP: This disco ball in the funky front living room was hung for a party and never came down. **BOTTOM LEFT:** This cosy sitting room is where Danielle says the family gathers for movie nights. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Danielle and Martin installed a pool and hot tub in their large side yard shortly after moving in. **RIGHT:** The boys’ upstairs bathroom is a cool mix of rustic and industrial. **MIDDLE AND BOTTOM:** The master bedroom is large enough to include a sitting space.

Martin’s two sons have the run of the top level of the home – not only is their bedroom (plus some spares) up there, but they have their own masculine washroom, a kitchenette at their disposal and a game and TV room, the envy of any teenage boy.

On the other hand, Martin and Danielle’s daughter Eden’s room, on the second floor, is girly. The master suite is on the same level, as is the casual space where the family tends to watch television together before bed (it was once another bedroom before Martin and Danielle knocked down the wall to open it up).

The main level is purely common spaces perfect for entertaining – but also for everyday life.

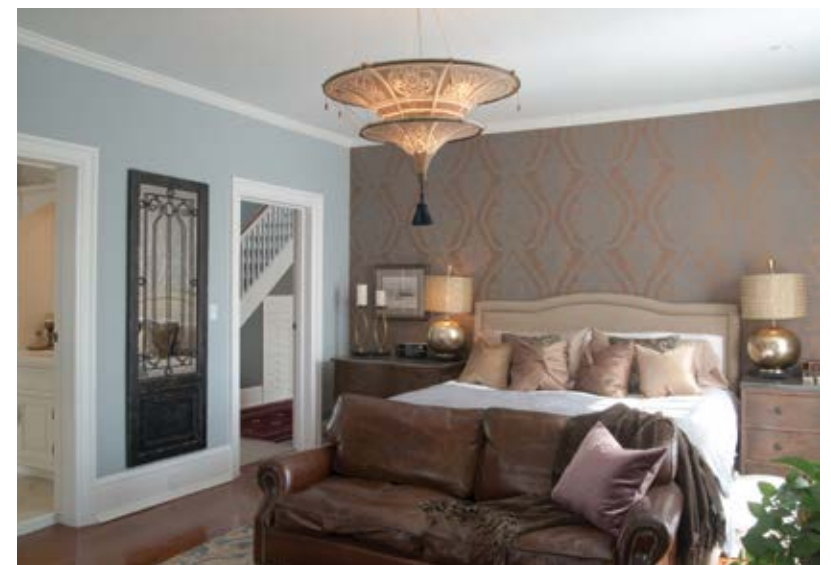
Danielle and Martin were able to start fresh with quite a bit of their furniture. While they loved what they had in their previous home, it was hand-picked for the space, so they sold some to the next owner and started over.

Both are drawn to one-of-a-kind pieces from across the globe. If it’s quirky and interesting, says Danielle, they’re intrigued by it – and there’s no shortage of quirky or interesting around their home! “We just buy things we like and think are interesting, and it all just comes together,” says Danielle. “The crazier the better,” she laughs.

They’re not out to break any design rules, they just know what they love and agree on things. “It would be easy to pick a million things from the store and just dress a room, but we’ve done it slowly.”

Just from the foyer, it’s easy to get a feel for the couple’s eclectic style. It’s wide and open and painted a bold red. Martin is drawn to nautical pieces, and a large model of a ship is a powerful statement on a front hutch. Behind it, towards the kitchen, is a figurehead from the front of a ship.

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feature



ABOVE: Even the pint-sized furniture in the playroom is beautiful. Every piece is carefully considered. **LEFT:** Eden's girly bedroom incorporates a colour scheme of coral and pale blue. **BELOW:** The boys' bedroom is the opposite: dark colours and rough textures suit their style better.



There are two different living spaces to the left and right of the foyer. Both have fireplaces, but that's where the similarities end. Danielle and Martin call the den their "escape." It also includes a desk. The living room is across the way where they often entertain guests – and it still has a disco ball hanging from the ceiling from one particular party.

The disco ball is a simple remnant they've decided is too fun to take down, and it's a good sign that Danielle and Martin are living up to their predecessors' reputations for memorable parties. Years from now it's their get-togethers that people will remember fondly when they think back on the home. In just a couple of years, they've already woven themselves into this home's story. **OH**

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