

Renovation





Party Place

A home designed for entertaining was important to these homeowners

BY Connie Adair. PHOTOS BY Bryan Groulx

The heart wants what the heart wants, and for Andrew and Denya (not their real names), the owners of this beautiful King, Ontario property, it was a home with all the charm of a New England inn and space to entertain everyone from a couple to a crowd in grand style.

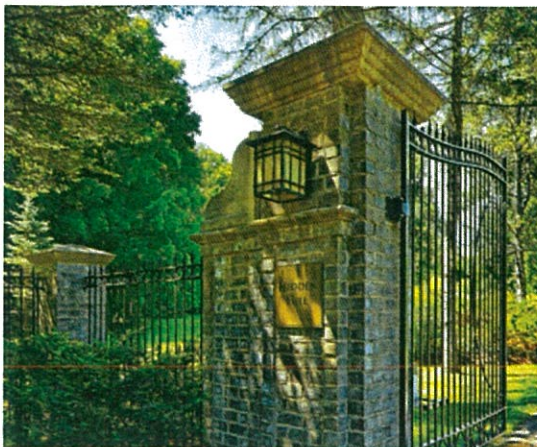
In January 2004, Denya says, "We walked up from the closed gate in knee-deep snow. We rounded the corner of the drive going up to a dreary house and were taken with the setting by the time we reached the parking area. We decided then and there to buy the property."

They bought the house on Andrew's birthday in April, and, in June, began the year-long building project. The 1960s home was demolished to its foundation and the

couple (both high-end residential design/builders) created their dream home. "We're professionals and didn't need much in the way of plans," Andrew says. "We've lived through 100 projects – 99 that other people paid for."

Denya says, "I always liked houses that were only one room wide, so each room on the main floor has views in multiple directions. We were committed to large windows for light and the dappling effect of the shadows throughout the day. In the evening, the tree lighting in the front garden and forest in the back are dramatic."

The residence has a large front hall that runs the width of the house. Practical features include two closets with plenty of room for more than two dozen coats. →



Great attention was paid to details throughout, including 100-year-old wide-plank floors, a two-storey wood burning fireplace and a true cook's kitchen.

For small gatherings the long, cook's island is instantly occupied. "Andrew delights in being the chef de maison as guests chat with him," Denya says.

The kitchen has 12-foot ceilings, a custom-crafted breakfast bar made of solid cherry and upper cabinets with glass doors. The useful and glamorous upper cabinets are accessible via a library ladder and rail.

The cabinets have latch-style hardware, a replica of Colonial brass hardware from Ball and Ball Antique Hardware Reproductions and Restoration in Pennsylvania. Custom wood panels for the fridge complement the wood countertops on the bar and the counter beside the bay window. The other two main counters are topped with Carrera marble.

The great room has a two-storey vaulted ceiling and 11-foot-high windows on three sides. Every year, Andrew and Denya order a 14-foot Fraser fir from North Carolina. Their decorating labour of love, using only green and white/silver ornaments, takes them four days to complete.

Guests enjoy the glittery visual treat during black tie Christmas Day festivities. The more relaxed Orphans' Party, held between Christmas and New Year's Day, is for those who don't "flee south" for the winter, she says.

"For large gatherings we use the front hall, which leads to the great room/kitchen. We can seat 24 guests, like the Canadian dressage team party after the Pan Am games, and still have standing room for cocktails," Denya says. "The only backlog tends to happen at the end of an evening when guests want to add their names and comments in our beloved guest book. We're now on our second guest book."



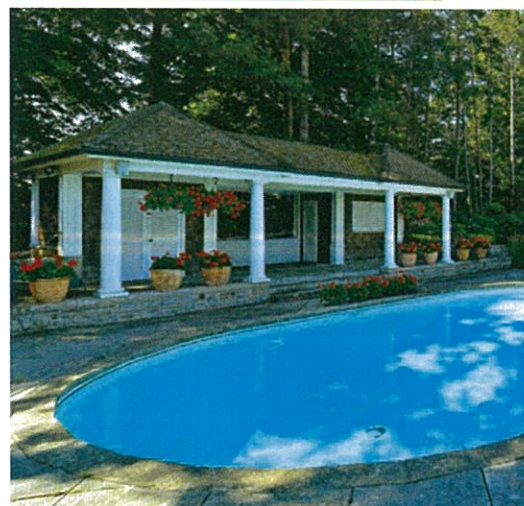
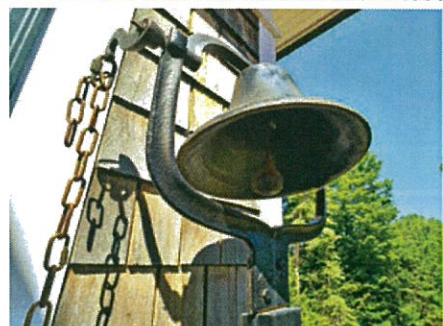
There are interesting entries from past parties, including a summer Beach Boys themed event that had a live band playing near the pool. Beach food, including fish and chips on a stick, were served to hungry partiers.

Andrew says his favourite party included an 18-piece swing band. All of the great room furniture was removed. The band set up in one half of the room and the other half used as a dance floor with enough space for 16 couples to dance.

The sunroom, which has windows on three sides, is another great spot for smaller dinner parties. The dining room has east and west views, and a beamed ceiling and lighted corner cabinets add sparkle to the room.

"We entertain a lot and we entertain well, handling two to 40 people with ease," Andrew says.

Nearly every feature of the home has a story – down to the bar rail in the great room. It was originally made for Canada's first wine bar, Vines, in downtown Toronto, he says. The kitchen's rolling ladder came from a library in Quebec.





TOP LEFT
Wrought iron gates and stone pillars create a formal welcome.

TOP MIDDLE
The gardens are lush and a pond adds extra interest.

LEFT
The kitchen has 12-foot ceilings and a custom-crafted breakfast bar made of solid cherry.

MIDDLE LEFT
The sunroom has windows on three sides and access to the deck.

MIDDLE LEFT
Many décor items have a story to tell whether it's a bell or a bar rail.

BOTTOM
A favourite outdoor party involved a Beach Boys-style band that played beside the pool.

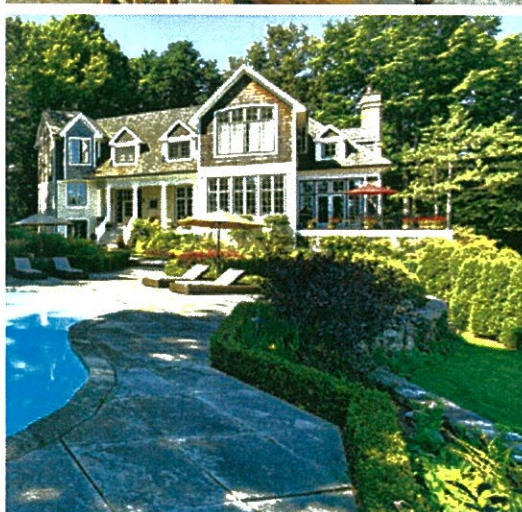
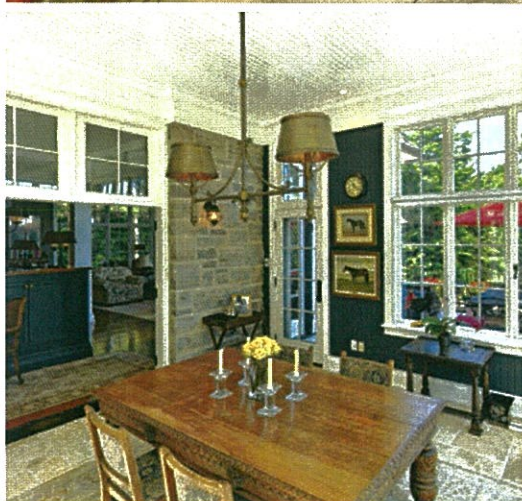
MIDDLE LEFT
Stone walls inside the sunroom give the space an indoor/outdoor atmosphere.

BELOW
The many windows in the living room allow for plenty of natural light to pour in.

Trusting Instincts

As work progressed, Andrew and Denya made changes immediately if something didn't look right and they urge other homeowners to do the same. "Make strong decisions. Get advice and don't second guess yourself. If it isn't right, your eye will tell you immediately if it has to be bigger, smaller, lighter and brighter. Fix it right away."

Andrew says homeowners may notice something they don't like but don't say anything right away. They think about it and in the meantime the wiring, plumbing and electrical is installed. "When it's 2 x 4s, moving a wall is a 20-minute job. By waiting it costs more and is a bigger job," he says. "Trust your own judgement."



TOP LEFT

A mix of décor items such as patterned pillows and a variety of lamps add character.

TOP MIDDLE

The white claw-foot bathtub gives a vintage atmosphere to the bathroom.

TOP RIGHT

Sliding French doors can be fully opened in good weather to admire the backyard.

BELOW

Staircase carpet runners are a safe choice to avoid slipping and complement other area rugs.

BOTTOM LEFT

Beams in the bedroom add interest to a soaring ceiling.

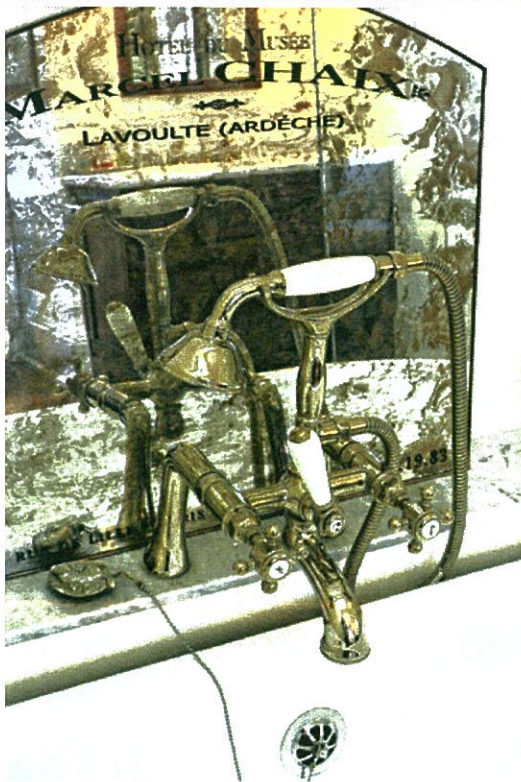
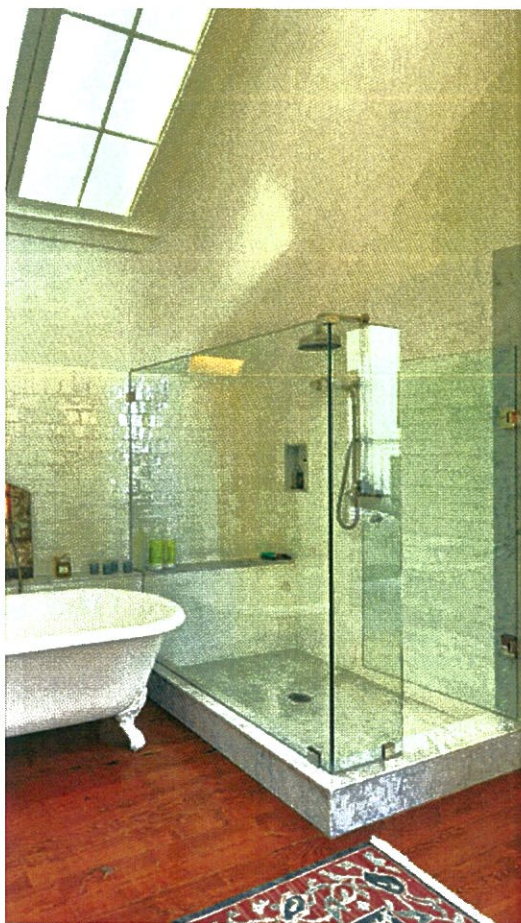
BOTTOM RIGHT

An antique faucet is a perfect choice for the claw-foot tub.

FAR MIDDLE

A sloped ceiling nook in the bedroom is ideal for bookcases.





Nearly every feature of the home has a story – down to the bar rail in the great room

A 16 x 35-foot study has working offices at each end and a casual seating area and fireplace between. Cabinetry and bookshelves separate the seating area from the offices so there are quiet places to work.

The second floor offers five bedrooms, including a master suite with four exposed rafters and five skylights.

The couple saw the project as a fantastic opportunity to build ideas they always wanted to try. For example, they wanted the house to look as if it was 100 years old. They used building techniques and materials used a century ago -- stone, wood, brick and simple details common to rural construction. The flush joint technique, which has mortar flush with stone, lends a rustic look, Andrew says.

One of the hardest things to figure out is

colour, so with each past project, the couple kept records of what worked and what didn't, Andrew says.

Benjamin Moore paint was used throughout, with a lot of Brandon Beige. "It's a great neutral that works well with bright sunlight, candlelight, reds, taupes and wood," Denya says. The palette enhances the charm of the home.

Hidden Hill was built with rigid foam insulation, so the house is solid and quiet even in stormy weather. That makes the views out of the huge windows even more enjoyable, she says.

An extensive outdoor lighting system highlights the mature English gardens, pool area and woods. The original pool and pool house were retained and Denya dug the new pond herself. **HC**