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Traditionally



A newly built home echoes the style of its neighbourhood by recreating a 1920s look, but with modern materials and up-to-date features providing added appeal

A personal interest in the 1920s was the inspiration behind the Upper Mount Royal home that Clarence Burke built and shared with his wife, Judy. Earlier this spring the couple sold and moved out of the house, but Burke has fond memories.

“It was a great home to come home to,” says Burke. “It’s so quiet and private.”

The new 5,000-square-foot, two-storey home blends so well with the neighbourhood that Burke is frequently complimented on his renovation. People are shocked when he tells them it is actually a new build. “I wanted it to fit in the neighbourhood,” says Burke. “I wanted it to look like it’s been here forever.”

Burke, a custom homebuilder, says the original house on the lot was in bad shape when the couple bought it eight years ago, but they didn’t start work right away.

Burke thought about renovating, but decided it wasn’t worth it. “There were too many issues with the house.”

The new house took only eight months to build, furnish and decorate from the time the foundation was poured. Even so, Burke spent a lot of that time sweating the details — everything from how the kitchen fireplace would line up with the front hallway to sourcing the traditional return air grills used throughout the home. >>>

The formal sitting room at the front of the home sets the opulent tone of this 1920s-inspired space.

Modern



Left: The spacious kitchen combines the best of the traditional look of the home with modern gadgetry and amenities.

Below: The bathtub in the master ensuite provides a downtown view, as well as a double-sided fireplace.

Bottom: The upholstery and drapery used throughout the home, including the master bedroom, provide a rich, warm look.



By combining period pieces with custom-built items and using materials with an older look, Burke was able to have the best of both worlds.

Burke used a number of period details, such as an imported antique iron gate topped with fleurs-de-lys that marks the driveway entrance. He drew on the gate's detailing for other decorative treatments, including the custom mailbox and the double-glass doors leading into the home's 800-bottle, climate-controlled wine cellar.

By combining period pieces with custom-built items and using materials with an older look, Burke was able to have the best of both worlds — the look he wanted and the efficiency he demanded. For example, the home's siding has the appearance of wood — a material that would have been used in Calgary homes in the 1920s — but it's actually a fibrous concrete called Hardie board, which is longer-lasting and needs less maintenance than wood.

Something definitely *not* of the 1920s is the technology that has been integrated into the home. Burke says more people want the latest gadgetry in everything from patio heaters to wine and theatre rooms. However, automation is not something everyone appreciates. "People love it, or they hate it," he says.

Burke is one of the former. This home is completely wired from the lighting controls to the entertainment systems, as well as the security

and climate control. There is even sensor-activated lighting in the stairs and automatic switches in the closets that light up when the closet doors are opened. Everything is controlled from discrete panels located throughout the house. In addition to ease of use, Burke sees a benefit in the clean look this creates, because fewer switches are required to operate the home's many features.

That clean look also extends to the decor. Almost all of the home's furnishings were purchased specifically for the space, including the Internet-enabled Mason & Hamlin grand piano in the living room. Sourcing the furnishings took a lot of time, but Burke had some assistance from local designer Reena Sotropa in pulling together materials.

Sotropa says that, with most of the furnishings,

they were starting from scratch or reupholstering, but adds the fabric choices weren't driven exclusively by what may have been used in the 1920s.

"You have to get a sense from the client of how authentic they want this to be," she says. "You can become a slave to the period, too."

Sotropa says most clients don't want to be that stringent, but instead are seeking to create more of a period feeling than a recreation.

"When it came to the fabrics, both Clarence and Judy expressed the desire for the house to be very rich and warm," she says. The Burkes opted for extremely high-end fabrics, so most of the window treatments are done in voluminous silk. Sotropa also added a lot of detail to the home through the use of trims on things like accent cushions. >>>

Modern living in period style

Clarence Burke's newly built home evokes the 1920s, but doesn't miss out on any modern conveniences.

"This house had to have the flair of the older style, but it had to have all the modern amenities," says Burke.

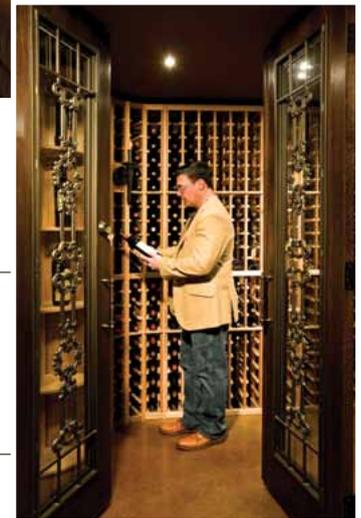
Calgary designer Reena Sotropa says many of her clients favour what she calls a transitional look. "It's traditional, but with clean lines and fewer fussy details," she says.

The Burke home achieved this balance using the following approaches.

Emphasize important period details. In the Burke home, all of the windows are single-hung and open only on the bottom sash, just as they would have during the 1920s. Burke also found ways to bring in period details like wainscoting, stepped-out closet doors and wallpaper, without making them as ornate — or drawing on them as extensively — as they would have been in the Roaring '20s.

Commit to the search. "It is difficult to get things," says Burke of his search for period architectural details. He found the details that perfect the look by visiting antique dealers and restoration specialists throughout the city regularly. One example is the ornate chandelier that hangs in the dining room. It was made in the 1920s and hails from France.

Take advantage of technology. It may sound contradictory, but modern inventions can give the impression of days gone by. Burke chose to put an art screen in the formal living room to conceal the television. The screen is a framed canvas that rolls down to cover the flat screen mounted above the fireplace when no one is watching TV.



Top left: The downstairs media room provides plenty of space for relaxation.

Top right: The bright wallpaper in the powder room provides another touch of 1920s style.

Right: The wine cellar's custom iron gates echo the pattern of the antique gates to the driveway entrance.

This touch of luxury extends to all of the finishes used in the home. Burke had custom handrails created in white oak, which were then stained a rich brown. The spindles on the stairways are also an original design.

Upstairs, the home's master suite spans 1,000 square feet and features a double-sided fireplace, a built-in work area complete with coffee bar and beverage centre, as well as a step-up tub offering a downtown view. Custom pass-through closets, a separate shower and powder room and a laundry area complete the suite. Two other bedrooms and a bathroom are also on the upper level.

On the main floor, the open plan allows for a separate living room that doesn't feel as though it's tucked off in a corner. The couple spent most of their time in the area at the back of the house, which includes the dining and family rooms as well as the large, well-appointed kitchen.

Here, buttery creams and rich browns create a soothing colour palette. A basket-weave backsplash is created from the two types of marble present throughout the home — crema marfil and dark empador. Elsewhere are all of the features you'd expect in a high-end kitchen: a large central island; granite countertops and built-in wine fridge. A wall of well-crafted cabinetry also conceals modern conveniences such as a walk-in pantry, refrigerator bank and full-size freezer, without sacrificing the home's period feel.

The home's lower level is set up for play with a theatre room, wine cellar, exercise and games room, as well as extra storage space and a second laundry room. In the laundry, Burke placed one

memento from the original house: a double-cast iron sink, which he saved and had re-glazed.

Another way the Burkes honoured the sentiment of the 1920s was by ensuring the home was always a fun-filled place when entertaining guests. According to Burke, the open plan provides a lot of functionality. "It's easy to move around," he says.

The couple has welcomed more than 85 people for dessert and drinks as part of the community's annual Progressive Dinner (where partygoers progress from one course to the next, each at a different participant's home). "It gets crowded, but that's a lot of people," says Burke.

Normally, things are a bit quieter and the Burkes have created a haven for that. "Come in the house. Close the gates. It feels like a sanctuary," says Burke. "Cocooned." 

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