



As the renovation got under way, (left), every window in the house was removed and several openings altered. Cast-iron radiators litter the back yard (middle) where a coach house

Renovators battled structural sag, oddball rooflines, low ceilings and iron dirt in helping a time-worn manse find balance and regain its youth

Rosedale rebuild

When it was last sold in December, 2001, the MLS listing for 32 Hawthorn Ave. in south Rosedale described it as a "beautifully maintained" fourplex. Well, maybe on the inside.

From the street, the property's curb appeal appeared to be stuck in the gutter. The brick had weathered to the colour of a dark bruise, the façade was choked with vines and spotted a Picasso-esque set of bay windows, one on the lower left and another on the upper right.

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"The house was particularly unbalanced," acknowledges Simon Rowlands, the designer hired by developer John Emery to turn this ugly duckling into a swan. It was a reinvention worthy of television's *Extreme Makeover* series. In 11 months, beginning in July of 2002, the house was gradually transformed from one of the saddest sacks on the street into one of the most elegant.

"We never seriously considered tearing it down," says Mr. Emery, president of Fairmont Properties, a company specializing in custom home construction and renovations. "The community wants these old houses saved if they can be saved. The colour of the brick is magnificent now, and that's a part of the reason you want to preserve it. But if you've got oddball rooflines, low ceilings or rotten walls, well, then you've just got to take it down."

Mr. Emery purchased the prop-

erty (50 by 150 feet) and the tony location (it had been listed for \$909,000).

The broken-up floor plan, featuring individual apartments on each floor plus a self-contained unit in the coach house, kept multiple bidders at bay.

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Mr. Rowlands & Associates Interior Design, worked closely with Mr. Emery to draft a new floor plan and put a fresh face on the exterior. "The changes were quite radical," the designer concedes, "and yet it's not out of keeping with what's around it on the street. I mixed and matched a number of different elements we'd seen in other homes around the neighbourhood, including the open porch on the front with the limestone balustrades. The upper windows were developed in part by the floor plan of the house and in part as a way to lighten up the exterior."

The renovation that ensued was absolute. The attached coach house in the rear was demolished and the main building was gutted beginning in July, 2002. Then the brick was acid-washed to bring back its original colour and warmth.

In fact, the brick match and repair is one of the most impressive elements of this particular project; nearly every window and even the door was moved during reconstruction but you'd hardly know it unless you were looking carefully.

As construction proceeded and the bay windows came off the front and sides of the house, it appeared there were more holes in the façade than bricks holding the place up.



beams in, and in this case we added new footings in the basement because we had new structural walls going in down there."

Mr. McPherson notes that while most of Rosedale stands on sand, 32 Hawthorn rises above some of the hardest ground his team has ever encountered. "We called it

were trying to drive in two-by-two wooden stakes, which is normally an easy thing to do, but we'd get them down two or three inches and they'd snap, the ground was that hard."

The challenges continued on the inside of the house. The original staircase was at the front en-

back of the main building just ahead of the 21-by-33-foot addition (which replaced the old coach house).

Improvements to the plan were also suggested as the interior framing proceeded; for instance, a second staircase to the basement was deemed unnecessary and