

REAL ESTATE *PLUS*

VIC WEST

Home rises from grave to glory

*Arthur
Curvie Lane*

By Diane Dakers
Times Colonist staff

IN THE MID-1980s, the stunning Queen Anne style Vic West home now owned by Shellie and Mike Gudgeon was little more than a derelict shell of a structure.

"When [previous owners Martin Whitehead and Hugh Peet] bought it, it was almost demolished," says Shellie Gudgeon, who, with her husband, bought the house three years ago.

"It was a wreck," agrees Whitehead. "It was all boarded up. It had been vacant for a while and it was, structurally, pretty well gone. From the porch down, we totally replaced it."

"It was in really bad shape. Kids had gotten into it and vandalized it. They had actually started a fire on the floor. They smashed every single pane of glass in the house." And there are more than 1,200 of them, he says.

Despite the mess it was in, Whitehead and Peet saw potential in the house. "It was a good location and it was on a fairly big piece of property," says Whitehead.

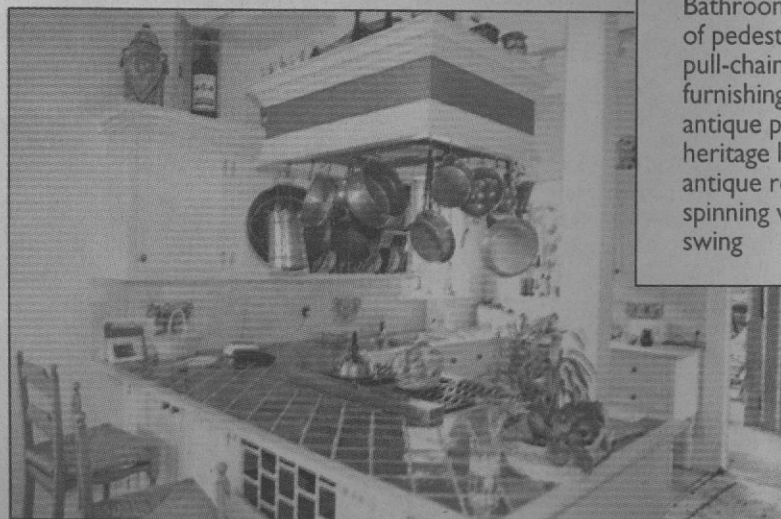
"Besides the fact that all the porches had been filled in and, architecturally, it had been altered substantially, I'd spent enough time in older houses and had an appreciation for older architecture that I saw that it was basically [salvageable]."

So the pair bought it from the city of Victoria in 1985, for \$35,010. "They put it up for public tender and we bought it."

Then, with some financial assistance from the Victoria Heritage Foundation — and a lot of their own money — Whitehead and Peet virtually rebuilt the house, restoring it to its original 1890 glory. "We



Window nook adjoins bright dining room



Updated kitchen with fireplace, part of recent renovations

The Quick Tour

Date built: 1890

Architect: Unknown

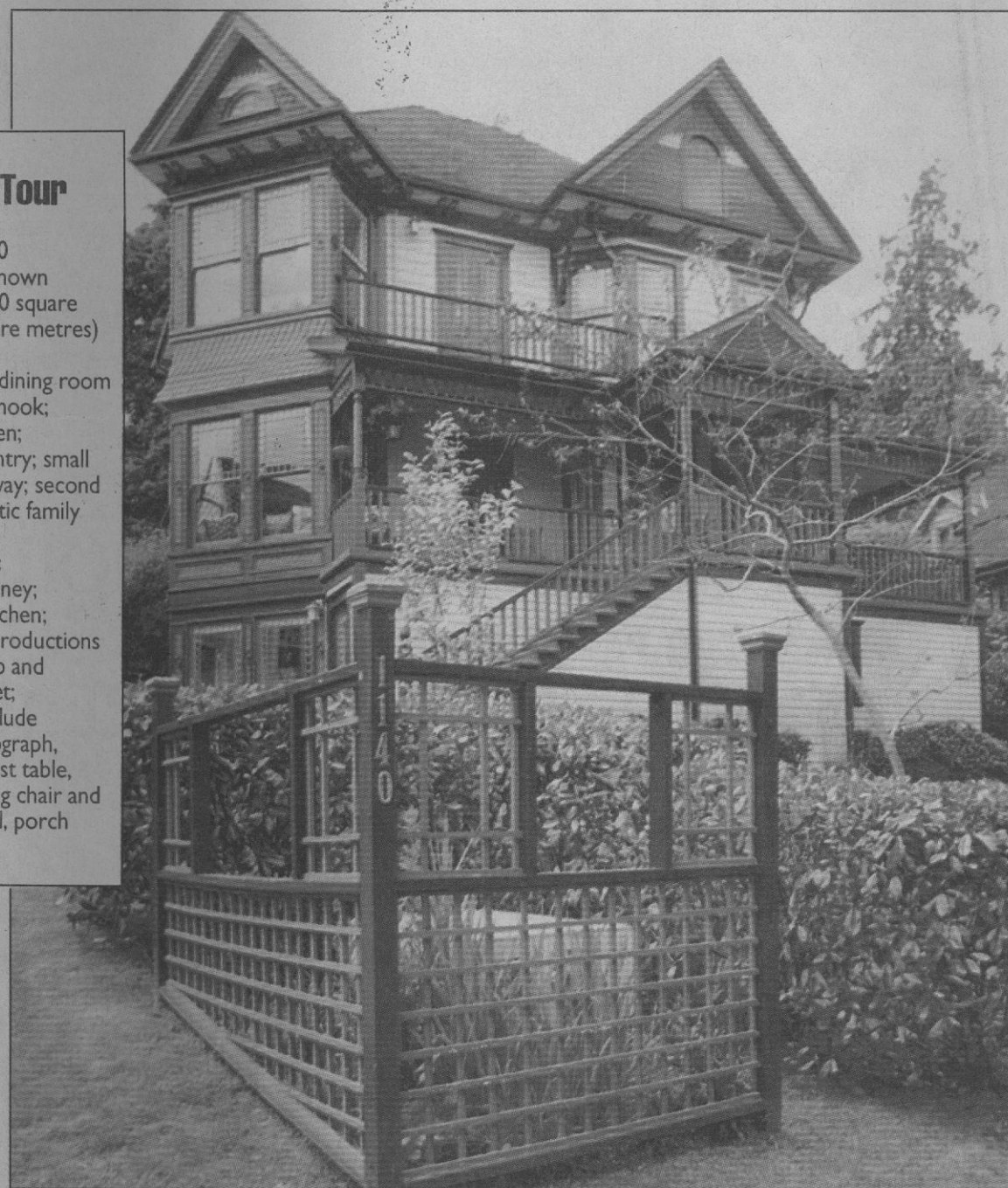
Size: about 3,600 square feet (324 square metres)

Main house:

Two bedrooms; dining room with window nook; updated kitchen; bathroom; pantry; small entrance hallway; second floor office; attic family room.

Unique details:

Star-shaped chimney; fireplace in kitchen; Bathroom reproductions of pedestal tub and pull-chain toilet; furnishings include antique phonograph, heritage harvest table, antique rocking chair and spinning wheel, porch swing



restored the outside and the inside as far as we could go."

For their efforts, the pair earned a President's Award from the

Hallmark Society for "absolutely over-the-top restoration," says Jennifer Barr, administrator of the

RESTORED • F2

Vic West home earned a Hallmark Society award for an "absolutely over-the-top restoration"

Restored: set against Selkirk Water

Victoria Heritage Foundation.

Adds Whitehead, "It was so far gone and we really did bring it back from the grave that we got a special award."

And all that work was not lost on current owner Shellie Gudgeon when she first set eyes on the Vic West house.

"We had been looking in Oak Bay. We had no intention of buying a house over here but when we found it, it was an easy decision. We'd been looking for months, and that was when real estate was pretty high. This was a Queen Anne house and I've always loved old houses. It was a very pretty house and the beauty of it was that it was all rewired and all the plumbing redone and everything."

So for her, this house represented the best of both worlds — "a heritage house without all the hassles," she notes.

"Most of the work that was done was done by Martin. He deserves the credit for this."

But, since she and husband Mike — who own Cecconi's, Il Terrazzo and Pescatore's restaurants — bought the property in 1993, they've carried on with the restoration process. "We've been able to come in where he left off and do all the things to complete it," says Shellie Gudgeon. "He did the outside and now we're trying to do the inside."

And they're just about finished, she says. "Other than the courtyard, it's complete. We've been working on it for three years and now we're doing the landscaping."

Inside the house, the Gudgeons have worked to make the house as true to its original state as possible.

"We've totally gutted inside to try to bring it back to historic accuracy. It's not exactly heritage but we're trying."

The house — called Maplewood — was built in 1890 for Beaumont Boggs, who came from Nova Scotia "to help quell the Riel Rebellion," says a description in *This Old House*, an inventory of Victoria heritage properties.

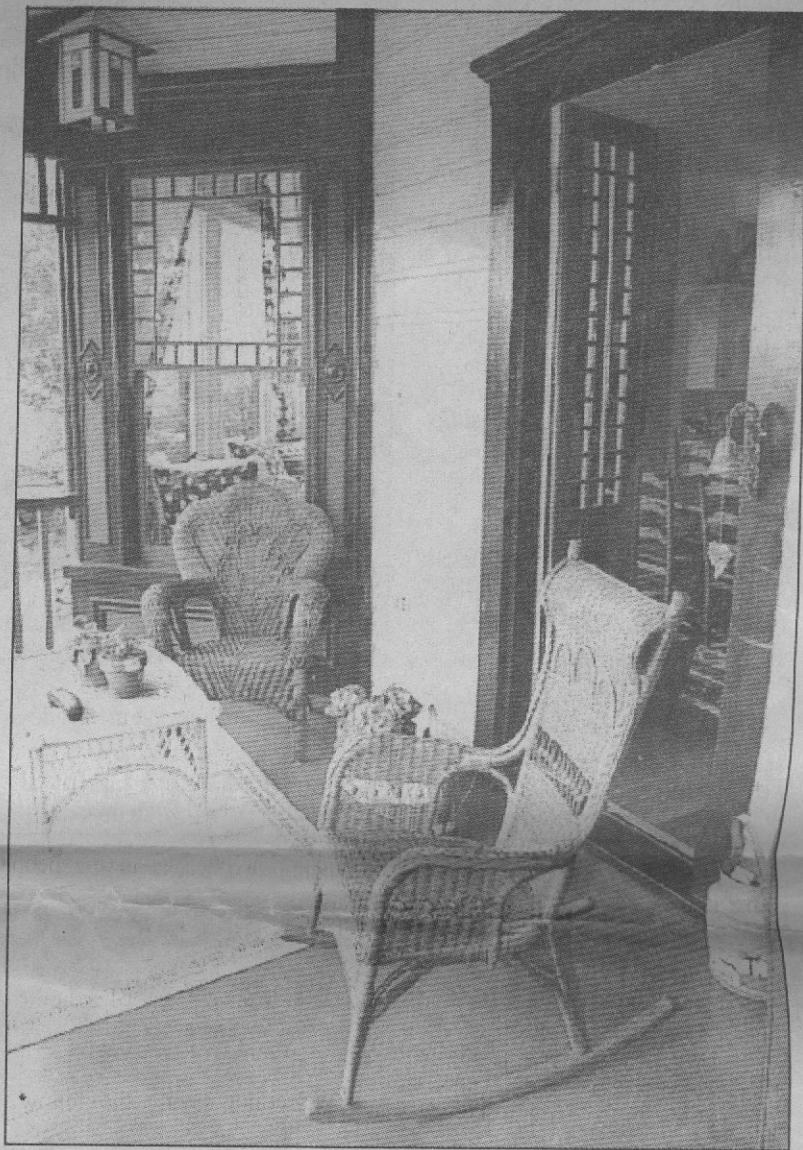
"After arriving in Victoria, he became a successful businessman, especially in the real estate boom of 1912-13," the book continues.

Other than that information, Gudgeon says she knows little of the house's history.

"Anything I've read does not say who the architect was. I'd like to know but that's one of the things I've never had time to pursue."

Coincidentally, though, Martin Whitehead once met Boggs's daughter, who gave him some added information. "He built it for his wife who didn't see it until the day they were married," he says. "It was sort of a wedding present for her."

"Boggs was an interesting guy — he was a land developer in the 800s. He was involved in the



Nook connects with dining room through double doors

original Uplands development."

According to the daughter, Boggs sold the house at one point, then bought it back again, says Whitehead.

Right now, Gudgeon, her husband and son live on the main and third floors of the house, with a tiny office on the second floor landing. (During Whitehead's renovations, the balance of the second floor and the ground-level basement were converted to private suites.)

But someday, the family intends to take over the second storey as well.

"The upstairs suite is exactly the same [as the main floor] — the same dimensions, shape and everything — so we'll probably make a big drawing room or library up there. If we ever take over upstairs, I'd be interested in what the [original] rooms were. I'd like to make it as close to the original as possible."

The third floor attic room is a family favorite, she notes. "It's a child's dream. It's got these great little nooks and crannies. My husband and my son hang out here. This is where they play."

With its built-in bed and bathroom, this space is already set up to be son Willie's bedroom

someday, she adds.

On the main floor, double doors open from the porch into a bright dining room, with adjoining window nook and open kitchen. "The kitchen was a '70s-style galley kitchen but we ripped it all out," says Gudgeon. "I wanted a great room — living room, dining room, kitchen. We built in the window seat. It's a great, great little spot."

In the bathroom, the couple has installed a pedestal tub and a pull-chain toilet, in keeping with the period feel of the house and its furnishings. And they've removed the carpet from the master bedroom floor to reveal hardwood flooring with the original residents' marks still on it. "It's fabulous," says Gudgeon. "There are even names carved in the floor."

With its ideal setting in an "alternative neighborhood," that overlooks the Selkirk Water, Gudgeon says she and her family — including a second child due in August — have no intention of leaving this house.

"This house has good ghosts in it. It's a great house . . . I think we'll stay here for a long time. Everything we've done we've done with the intention that we're staying. It hasn't just been a cosmetic job."