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STORYBOOK PRESENT

House embraces home and job

By Diane Dakers

Times Colonist staff

FOR JOANNA and Barney Hagar, the distinctive Queen Anne style brick house at the corner of Balmoral Road and Vancouver Street provides the ideal mix of business and pleasure.

The couple lives in the two renovated upper storeys of the heritage house, and their antique bookshop — Poor Richard's Books — occupies the main floor.

"I can't think of a better way to combine business and home," says Joanna.

The Hagars bought the house 14 years ago, after Barney saw a For Sale sign on the property. "I drove by and came home and said, 'The place is for sale — our favorite house,'" he says.

A developer, who had purchased the former rooming house with the intention of buying the laundry business next door, tearing down both buildings and putting up a new development, offered the house for sale when the laundry refused to sell.

"We kind of saved it from being demolished," Barney says.

At the time, the Hagars were living in Rockland, and Poor Richard's was located on Fort Street. The couple had to find a new home for the store and, while they weren't necessarily looking for a location that would combine their home and business, when the opportunity arose it just made sense, says Joanna.

"We had to move [the store]. The first store was right across from Lund's. The building was sold and we had to find a place.

"One day Barney came back to the shop and said, 'The brick house is for sale. Let's buy it.' It's really worked out well."

But it was a huge project to clean up the house and renovate it to its

The Quick Tour

Date built: 1893

Architect: Unknown

Size:

About 250 square metres (2,800 square feet)

Rooms:

Four bedrooms; office; living room; dining room; kitchen; two bathrooms; bookstore on main floor.

Unique Details:

One of few brick houses in Victoria; brick rosettes built into exterior design; original black glass doorknobs throughout house; original hinges and hardware on front door; fir floors throughout; pulley system from kitchen window down to garden; original bathtub; bathroom sink came from Empress Hotel

present state, they say. "It was a shell, gutted," says Barney. "There was virtually nothing left . . . We had to rewire the house completely, replumb it completely, sound-proof it. We just did everything.

"And we had to do it in three months because we closed the store on Fort Street and we sold our house in Rockland in order to do the renovations here."

In the end, though, "it was the best move we ever made, but people said we were nuts," says Joanna, adding that this house was one of the first zonings in the city "where you could live above your business."



DEBRA BRASH/TIMES COLONIST

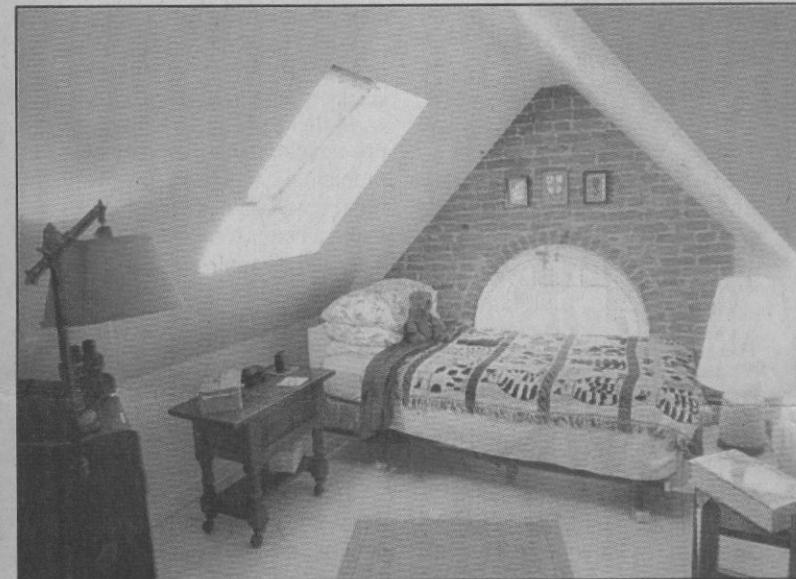
Joanna and Barney Hagar: a 'neat house' in 'neat neighborhood'

That business now occupies a 90-square metre (1,000-square foot) main floor space that used to house a dining room, living room, kitchen and pantry.

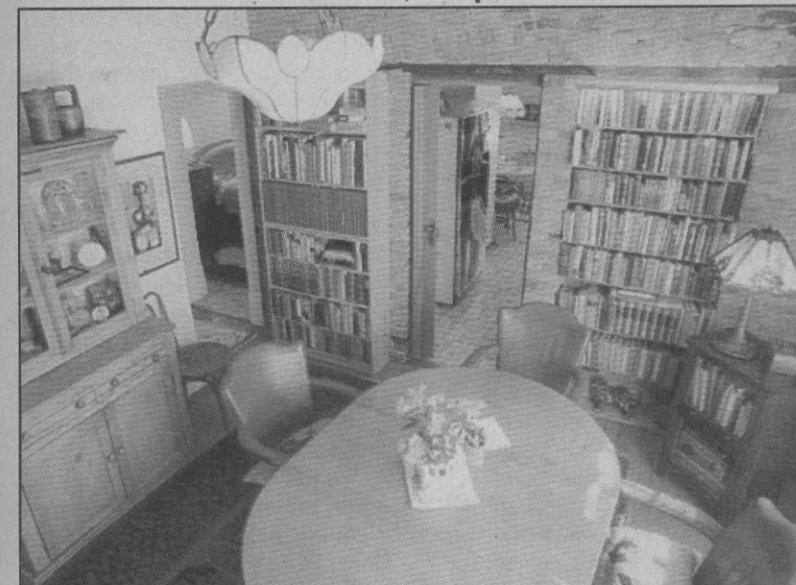
Upstairs, the Hagars converted

the original master bedroom into a living room, and two other bedrooms into a dining room and kitchen.

A small office ("the computer room for the bookstore," says



One of three bedrooms in attic, the 'piece de resistance'



Hagars created dining room and a kitchen from two bedrooms

Barney); and the main bedroom, adjoining the original bathroom with its original tub, complete the Hagars' second floor living space.

But the attic is the *piece de resistance* for the couple. "At the

time of the renovations, we inquired about going up into the attic, which hadn't been touched for several



DEBRA BRASH/TIMES COLONIST

Barney calls office 'the computer room for the bookstore.' It's part of second-floor living space

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Storybook: Ideal mix for work and play

years," notes Joanna. But nobody could figure a way to do it.

"Then, about six years ago, we got into the attic at last," says Barney.

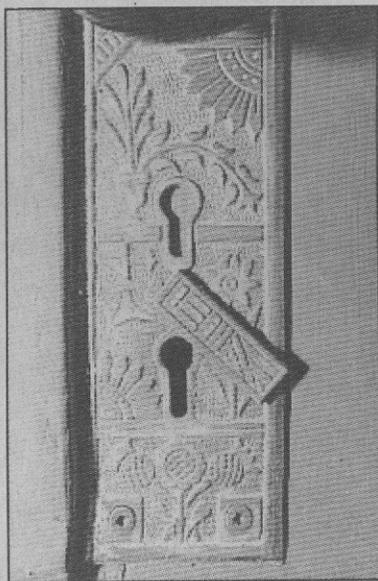
"[Designer] Shushan Egoyan had been looking at the attic, climbing up a ladder in the bathroom to get up there, then she designed this for us," he says, pointing to the open stairway leading from the dining room to the renovated attic, which now features three bedrooms and a bathroom.

"It's made a four-bedroom house," says Joanna. "It's bigger than you think. There's more in it than you think."

Outside, the Hagers created a quiet garden, another source of pride for them. "Everything you see there, I planted," says Barney. "It was a disaster out there. It was tall grass and old car bodies and lots of junk."

But now, the garden — with its fruit and nut trees and the couple's three cats lounging on the grass — adds to the house's charm. "It's really a very private garden," says Joanna. "Children can come out and look at the cats, and gardeners love to come out and look at it. It's sort of a secret garden in the middle of town."

One of the highlights of the backyard garden is a Kifsgate Rose bush, gradually winding its way up an apple tree. "It came from a



Antique keyhole unique item.

manor in Kifsgate in England where it was developed about 150 years ago," notes Barney.

"It's an old-fashioned rose and it'll bloom for three weeks to a month every year and that's it," says Joanna, admiring the full white flowers.

At the side of the house is a parking lot for the bookstore that Barney bartered with the city to purchase. "We made a deal that we would make the house heritage if they would sell us the lot."

While Barney and Joanna are up-to-date on the recent history of their house, details of its building and early days are sketchy.

This Old House, an inventory of Victoria heritage properties, states the house was built in 1893 by brothers John and James Baker, "proprietors of Baker Bros. brickyards on Douglas Street."

But it was their brother Michael Baker, "a prominent commission merchant and a booster of the agricultural industries on Vancouver Island," who actually moved into the house.

Barney says he believes the house was built earlier, though, in 1875 when the brothers bought the lot and obtained a building permit. But he's heard that "the Queen Anne design wasn't done in 1875 — not until 1885."

Joanna speculates that the brothers possibly built a wooden house that was torn down to build the brick one that now stands on the lot.

But whatever its past, the Hagers love the house at present.

"It's a neat house and it's a neat neighborhood," says Joanna. "It's not too big. It's good for a party. There's lots of room for a party. It's very quiet."

And she says they plan to stay "as long as I can make the stairs and Barney can do the garden."