

1458 BEGBEST

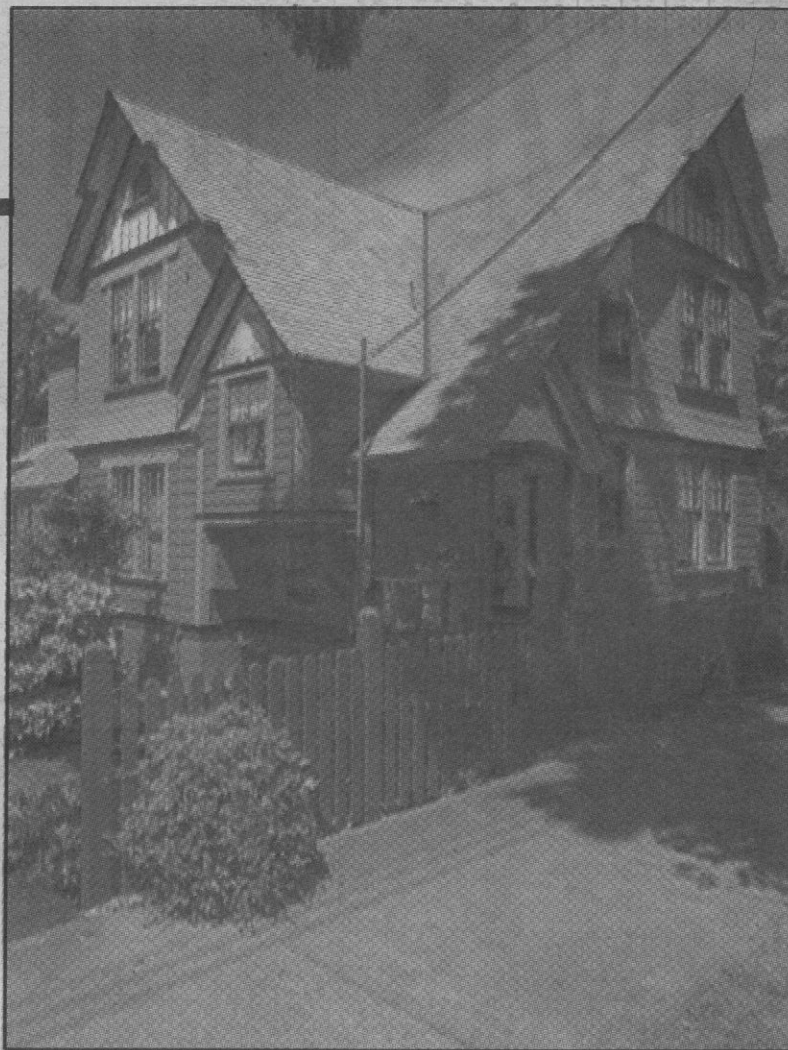
# HOME

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**Porches ... condos ... and more**





# Former glories

## Century old beauty is brought back to light after extensive restoration

**S**HELAGH HALL's Queen Anne cottage is an eyestopper. The paint scheme of five different colors is sure to draw second glances to the 1894 home on Begbie Street. The deckle-cut shingles on the second storey are a caramel shade, over brick-red, old-fashioned channel siding around the first storey. Dark burgundy highlights some of the trim while the batten boards at the corners are a pale spruce. The fifth color is a yellowy cream, applied to the soffits and sunburst decorations.

"It's a pretty house, isn't it?" said Hall.

It certainly stands out among its more conservatively painted neighbors back of Stadacona Park, along the commuter traffic "raceway" to Shelbourne Street.

Architect A.C. Ewart built the house for himself just two years before he designed the 1896 brick Leiser Building, now occupied by the Capital Regional District at 522-524 Yates Street.

When Hall bought the Begbie Street house almost five years ago, it was a washed-out off-white, the paint "peeling off in great gobs." A pile of mud and rubble filled the small backyard.

The house had been chopped up in the 1950s as small suites, rented to a succession of transient tenants, and by the time Hall acquired the house the inside was in sad shape. Unexplained physical phenomena suggested there was also a rather nasty ghost in residence, she said, and a priest was asked in to bless the house.

The mean spirit seems to have fled, as the house was brightened outside and Hall renovated inside.

"They actually did a very good job of ruining it in the 1950s — very professionally done," Hall said with some sarcasm.

Restoration has certainly rescued the elaborately decorated, two-storey cottage, which she has called Loughananna, for her mother's birthplace in Ireland. Irish, English and Canadian strains mingle in Hall, who was born in England but has lived in Canada for 40 years after arriving here as a war bride.

She's an engaging woman, who sells real estate for a living, but writes poetry and has a fount of stories about her home, and friends and acquaintances. Her brother is Frederic Raphael, the English novelist and playwright.

Hall has installed her collection of antiques to complement the home and Irish souvenirs add a welcoming touch.

She wanted to achieve a faithful restoration, to the point of reproducing the original color scheme and contacted

consultant Stuart Stark, who specializes in heritage buildings.

"If you're going to restore something, it should be done right," said Hall.

"She wanted to do the right thing by the house," said Stark. "She was very firm that she wanted it done correctly."

He took samples from areas of the house that wouldn't have been scraped in the several re-paintings the house endured in a century. "It ends up looking like a layer cake under the microscope," he said.

The skill in paint analysis is in detecting which layer is an undercoat, which was the finish coat, and determining how the elements have faded the original colors, then matching them to modern paints.

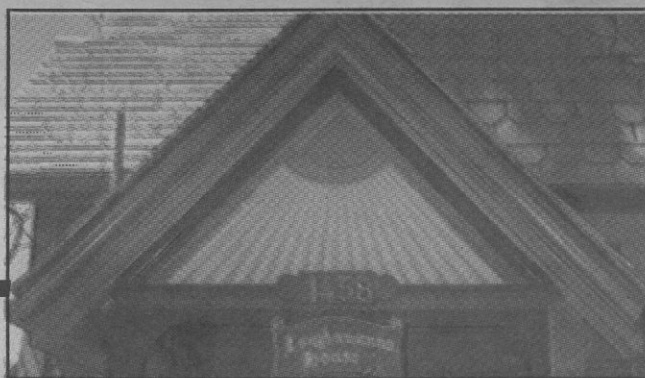
Presentation of the original color scheme brought a figurative gasp, but Hall determined to have the colors put back on. "The neighbors came out in horror," she said, but an award from the Hall Mark Society this spring has only reinforced her decision to proceed.

"Now the house steps out to meet you," she said, standing by the foxgloves, lupins and canterbury bells that have sprung up spontaneously in the front garden, souvenirs of earlier flowerbeds.

It's not her first experience at restoring a heritage home. A decade ago, Hall tackled a country cottage at Cahir, County Tipperary in Ireland, now a national monument.

The country home set on a knoll overlooking the River Suir was the last by regency architect John Nash, and was built about 1817 on the estate of the Earl of Glengal. It features rustic, peeled-branch trelliswork and a thatched roof.

An album of photographs and a swatch of newspaper clippings refer to the extensive work on the badly-neglected Swiss Cottage. A brass plaque presented on the official opening as a historic site in 1989 has pride of place in Shelagh Hall's sitting room.



Detail shows the many colors discovered after paint analysis was performed on this heritage house.

Story by Norman Gidney

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