

## Winnipeg Free Press Sunday Homes

### Oozing with character McMillan Avenue home loaded with charm



Jeff Stern (below), listing agent for 791 McMillan Ave., says with 2,156 square feet of space, the home is large, yet the warmth of the woodwork helps keep it feeling cosy and welcoming.



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By Todd Lewys

WHEN a home is nearly 100 years old, it's understandable that it may have been subjected to a number of well-intended, but ill-advised decorating trends.

However, the occasional River Heights/Crescentwood classic abode somehow comes through relatively untouched by the ravages of time. Imagine the pleasant surprise that awaits you when you walk into a parlour (with an adjacent screened-in verandah) that is bursting with original oak woodwork, and an ornamental fireplace inset with green tile and a shield-shaped mirror.

Best of all, most of the woodwork found in 791 McMillan Ave. has never been touched by paint.

"You don't see many houses like this any more," says Jeff Stern, a real-estate agent for REMAX Realty.

"Most of the classic old houses I sell in the River Heights and Crescentwood areas come with the woodwork painted over. When you see that, you can't help but feel sad. Contrast that with coming into this home; all the oak -- door trim, baseboards, window casings, stairs (and ornamental fireplace) create a warm, comfortable feeling that takes you back in time."

Everything in the 2,156-square-foot., two-and-three-quarter-storey home has stood the test of time. First, there's the parlour, with all its amazing woodwork and refinished oak floors (which is the case throughout the entire home). A few steps to the right is a sitting room that gives way to the dining room through a double-wide entrance with -- you guessed it -- original oak door trim.

Inset on either side of the entrance are pocket doors that date back to the day the house was built.

"They work as well as the day they were installed," says Stern.

"This home has held up really nicely. Not only that, but the sitting room also has a trio of oak-trimmed bay windows that let in lots of light. In the dining room, you've got a ceiling that's just over nine feet high, plus one-foot-high oak baseboards and low oak window sills. There's even oak trim around the periphery of the ceiling. Oak is timeless, so it looks as good today as it did nearly 100 years ago."

Stern adds that the warm ambiance created by all the oak woodwork creates a cozy feeling, something you might not expect in a home this big.

"This home doesn't feel that large, and I believe that the oak woodwork plays a big part in that -- if the home's decor were more neutral, with the oak painted over and carpeting on the floors, the lighter colours would make it feel larger and not as welcoming," he says.

"The oak just adds a character and warmth that hits you the moment you walk in through the front door."

Access to the second floor is gained by ascending an original -- and winding -- oak staircase to a landing surrounded by no fewer than four bedrooms and one four-piece bathroom complete with vintage clawfoot bathtub. Naturally, all the flooring on the second level is refinished oak, too.

All four bedrooms are large, even by today's standards, with surprisingly wide and deep closets. The master bedroom, with three oak-trimmed windows along an angled wall, is not only large but warm, with rounded, old-style light fixtures giving it a jaunty 1940s feel.

A second set of stairs leads to the third level. There, two distinct (and large) rooms provide an unexpected surprise.

"You just don't expect an area so large up on a third level," says Stern.

"Really, you expect a small room, but when you see all this in front of you, you can't help but smile. The area directly off the stairway can be used as a media room, home office or home gym, while the room in back can be used as a fifth bedroom, guest bedroom or just for storage. It's a huge area, and the dormer window in the bedroom really sets things off."

With a rock-solid (no pun intended) stone foundation, 791 McMillan is (more or less) as sound as the day it was built, he adds.

"This is the best stone foundation I've seen in a long, long time," Stern says. "There's a lot you can do with the basement -- it has lots of room, and great window space, too."

"This home has so much character, it's a very sweet home. It's exciting to get a listing like this, because you don't get many that have stood the test of time this well. It's a real gift from the real estate gods, a home that I know that a young family or hobbyists will really enjoy for all its character, and great location."