

# DECOR

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## Former 1880s bungalow has reno history and old boots found in the rafters

**NP** **BRENDA McMILLAN, SPECIAL TO NATIONAL POST** | 12/08/14 | Last Updated: 12/08/14 4:14 PM ET  
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Step inside and the decor is "loft-industrial" style. Sight-lines are clear to the back yard 40-feet away but most striking are the original basement's brick walls in the living and dining areas. Priority Management Ltd

Some properties have an unusual history of renovations that surprises new owners. Most often, enthralled would-be buyers only discover their beloved home's past after they move in from old documents or long-time neighbours. Jeff Reed, the curious buyer of 147 Wheeler Ave. in the Beach, visited the Toronto Archives to find out about the home's quirks.



Once a cute frame bungalow with a front porch and a basement, 147 Wheeler Ave. was one of the first homes built on the street. This archival photo is circa 1924. courtesy Priority Management Ltd

Once a cute frame bungalow with a front porch and a basement on a 17 x 102-foot lot, 147 Wheeler Ave. was one of the first homes built on the street. Constructed in the late 1880s on cleared forested land with a small ravine on its south side, this home was well located because of its proximity to Queen Street, the lake and the new amusement parks popping up. But this tiny home did not remain a bungalow for long.

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Its first reno was a major one. In the early 1920s, the slope of Wheeler Avenue changed to meet up with newly expanded Norway Avenue. That affected number 147 as the ground level had to change around it and to the south. Somehow the entire home with its double-brick basement walls and foundations was raised about three or four feet. The result was that the bungalow lost its basement and started life anew as a two-storey residence. This is an impressive feat of engineering when you consider that a horse and cart was the usual form of conveyance on the area's gravel roads at the time.



In 2011, the ivied white house was sold to Jeff Reed, who had big plans to renovate again. Here's the house facade today. Priority Management Ltd

Much later, a typical addition at the back at ground level expanded the kitchen to accommodate a mudroom. Also, according to photos, a second-storey front porch came and went. Then, in 2011, the ivied white house was sold to Mr. Reed, who had big plans to renovate again. His goal was to excavate and put in a basement, but that wasn't possible as things turned out. An underground stream runs through his property.

It originally followed the natural southwest slope of the land from Kingston Road through ravines toward the lake, but now runs belowground through Mr. Reed's back yard and others. He discovered the problem when he plunged a shovel into the ground and water filled the hole. That nixed the basement idea. So, looking skyward, he made other plans. After gutting the first and second floors and with an OMB and neighbour-approved design, he added a 14 x 20-foot main floor kitchen at the back, and a third storey.

The first owners would not recognize their bungalow today. The three-storey front is all reclaimed brick (imported from Detroit) with a modern take on a porch roof, but without the porch. The brick is an appeasement to the neighbours who wanted the house to blend with the neighbourhood. The rest of the house has a stucco finish.





Staircase handrails of wrought iron piping are industrial in nature but look right at home on the rustic wall while the glass bordering the staircases ensures that light penetrates and the view from the living room of the exposed brick isn't compromised. Priority Management Ltd

Step inside and the decor is “loft-industrial” style. Sight-lines are clear to the back yard 40-feet away but most striking are the original basement’s brick walls in the living and dining areas. Now scraped clean, the once pargetted brick has also been tuck pointed using mortar designed with course sand from the home’s old concrete floor to look original, then spruced up with a little sand blasting. The result is rustic and beautifully warm. Adding to the ambiance of this room are the open ceiling joists, all original except in places where some sisterly support was required.

The kitchen at the back has doors to a small brick patio, leftovers from the reclaimed brick imported from Chicago for one wall of the kitchen addition. This area is clean and modern, but welcoming with heavy custom rip-cut oak cabinet surrounds and white cabinet doors. On one wall is an inset “history case” over a high desk. Backed with a piece of original lath and plaster stud wall, it contains old boots found in the rafters and some other memorabilia. It speaks to the dedication of Mr. Reed to honour the original character of the house.



The kitchen at the back has doors to a small brick patio, leftovers from the reclaimed brick imported from Chicago for one wall of the kitchen addition. Priority Management Ltd

The second floor contains a roomy limestone bathroom and two modern bedrooms with pale painted drywall. The third is a sumptuous skylit master bedroom, and a bathroom separated from the bedroom by barn-style sliding doors. The 250 square-foot balcony overlooking the back yard is a private oasis.

The home's gas-powered hydronic radiant floor heating is efficient, as is the tankless hot water system. Polished concrete on the main floor and dark engineered wood on the stories above feels comfy underfoot. Weathered barn board-style fir trim around windows and doors is an unusual touch, but the neutral gray sets off the black vinyl windows very well and brings out the warmth of the brick. Staircase handrails of wrought iron piping are industrial in nature but look right at home on the rustic wall while the glass bordering the staircases ensures that light penetrates and the view from the living room of the exposed brick isn't compromised.

After the level of the back yard was fixed to ferry water away from the home's foundations, the shed was given a facelift. Although Mr. Reed won't have to worry about a crumbling or leaky basement, typical in the Beach, he installed a drainage system under the patio to ensure that heavy storms won't cause any flooding.

Mr. Reed's renovations cost \$225,000 and took 6.5 months, including a delay while engineers investigated how best to ensure that the proposed back addition didn't wash away in a hurricane. The original baby bungalow has grown up to be a tall, elegant and functional home. And wet bottoms are a thing of the past.



The 250 square-foot balcony overlooking the back yard is a private oasis. Priority Management Ltd

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