



# STATELY Clinker Brick Home

*Preserved for generations to come*

by **MARIE SOPROVICH**

**THERE IS SOMETHING INCREDIBLY ROMANTIC ABOUT A STATELY OLDER HOME.** The artistic vision of creative designers, builders and architects is captured in the structure of these older buildings and they preserve a snapshot of Edmonton's past in the style and magnificence of earlier days. Builders and professional renovators over the years translate and improve upon these structures ensuring the longevity of the master pieces, such as this home and focus attention on careful repairs, maintenance, upgrades and modern living comforts. Professional renovators also pay close attention to details such as using particular building materials and appropriate finishing needed to fit the structure. Character and history are captured in our cities' older homes and a great deal of gratitude should also be extended to the home owners who invest in improvements ensuring the longevity and contribution their dwelling provides to the history of our neighbourhoods and city. A professional renovator is essential to preserving the past while attending to necessary structural repairs and improving the living comforts and needs of the day for the modern family.

This house is what can be called a Clinker Brick home. It was built in the early part of the last century and has grandness in both structure and location. Basic building materials used for this home consisted of a type of brick, somewhat unique and capturing of an era in Edmonton's past. This regional

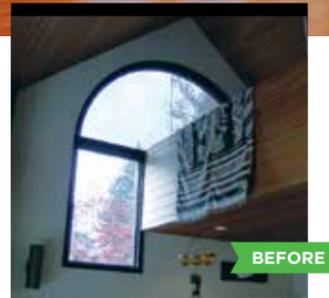
construction material was at one time a discarded, and thought to be waste material unsuitable for construction. Edmonton Historical Building Society has documented history on the Clinker Brick and reported that these bricks were at one time set aside because they were over-fired, burnt and misshapen. Sometime however, back as early as 1913 some builders and architects started looking at the uneven colour and textures for their unique qualities and found that the building durability was solid. The distinctive texture and appearance of the Clinker Brick had a visual appeal and became quite popular. Edmonton has some very famous homes which were built using Clinker Brick as a construction material. The James Rutherford House is a well-known and good example of the preservation of this style of housing. There are other gems around the city and the bricks capture the imagination of a romantic era and ingenuity on the part of the builder.

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Homeowners of this Clinker Brick west end home shared a deep love for the character and location of their home. It was a keeper. In order for their home to meet the needs of their growing family and their living style they realized that the house, which had undergone a dated and poorly constructed renovation in the 70's, was in need of significant foundation repairs and overall modernizations. Along with the essential repairs, the family wanted more space for their growing family and a serious upgrade of creature comforts. Their wish list included increasing the number of bedrooms, a new kitchen, bathrooms, general over all

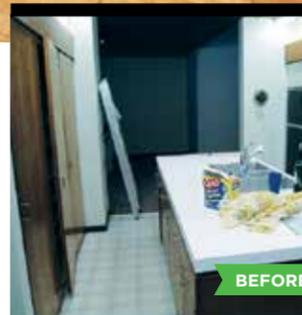
renovation of the interior and a finished basement. All of these desires were requested within the existing footprint of the house. History was written all over the structure from the foundation, through the walls, into the small and dated closet spaces and the little rooms that were designed for a time when families didn't have as many personal belongings and gadgets to fill their lives.

The first place requiring attention was the foundation. Basement repairs on a Clinker Brick house are a little tricky as lifting any house off a foundation creates stress on the structure. When a layer of bricks is added into the equation other





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options must be considered. In addition to the necessary foundation repairs, the basement was also shallow and in serious contrast with the tall homeowner and the living space they wanted to create. Foundation specialist Kevin Bradell from Abarent Construction provided the expertise to assess the strength of the existing foundation walls and make plans as to how to deepen the basement and strengthen the foundation without lifting the structure. Foundation walls were reinforced, beams were added, a complete redo of the sewer and

water were necessary as were drainage mats and weeping tile. The reinforcement of the existing foundation was challenged one wall at a time and as the strength of the structure increased they were able to take the basement floor down another three feet. Abarent worked their magic to create a "new and improved" 1800 square foot basement that was deep and wide and up to code with all sewer, water and elevation needs. Now that the foundation work was handled Aquarian could tackle the rest of the renovations in the remainder of the house.

As the Aquarian team started opening the walls in the living area, a mishmash of 1920 Knob and Tube wiring and the extent of a 35 year old bad renovation became evident. There was also a steel circular stair case that needed to be removed piece by piece, new windows to be added and a loft space that needed to be reclaimed for a bedroom. In the kitchen utility was not sacrificed for beauty. Roll out shelves for pots, built in ovens, warming drawers and a beverage centre brought the 21st Century alive. Added kitchen windows brought sunshine into the home. Now exterior window frames needed particular attention as the bricks were tediously removed, cleaned and re-laid in the original style of the house.

The basement was rebuilt with all the modern conveniences of a new laundry room, family area, a workout room, extra bedrooms and plenty of storage. The loft, now converted to a bedroom reclaimed space in the house and had a delightfully airy and practical feel. The homeowners,

with the help of their renovator Aquarian, breathed new life into this romantic and stately home. From the home's strong foundation, through the refreshed interior, to the reclaimed Clinker Brick, this house will be a welcoming reminder of what is possible when old meets new and creativity, investment, teamwork and professionalism come together for a long time to come. Long live the Clinker Brick and the heritage value it brings to the city.



**MARIE SOPROVICH**  
OWNER OF AQUARIAN RENOVATIONS;  
WRITER, VISIONARY, LEADER.  
Visit [www.aquarianrenovations.com](http://www.aquarianrenovations.com) or  
call 780.481.7671



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