



THE BEAUTY OF A CUSTOM HOME IS THAT IT CAN BE DESIGNED not only for the owners' personal tastes, but also for their individual lifestyle and needs.

But the best custom homes do a little more – accommodating and enhancing the land and the neighbourhood, for example. This home, in the Victoria suburb of View Royal, goes a little further, incorporating both the family's heritage and that of the land itself – beautifully.

The 2005 built home was designed from scratch by homeowners Joan and Chris Walker, home builder, designer and owner of Christopher Developments. "This one was, we said, final, but as a builder, it's never final" Walker says with a smile. Walker discovered the property in 2003, then a large acreage home to a small waterfront cottage.

Located minutes from Victoria, Walker created the attractive Mills Cove subdivision with the bulk of the land. Keeping two prime waterfront lots for his own custom home overlooking Millstream Creek – named for the old Hudson's Bay Company mill site – where it flows into a quiet tidal inlet.

Combining timeless Arts and Crafts elements such as the peaked roofline and shake siding, with the feel of a Scottish manor and ample use of rough granite continued inside – it's a home that effortlessly blends comfort with the style the young family wanted. Interestingly, "The first walker who came to North America was a stonemason," Walker notes.

The double-size lot offers ample privacy and access to the waterfront at the family's doorstep – home also to playful seals and other wildlife, to the delight of the Walkers' preschooler, Anya.

Indeed, turned as it is towards forest and water, with all the living area at the side and rear, the modest, 3,100 square-foot home enjoys a remarkably quiet, peaceful ambience. Compared to building a home for others, the process of designing and building their own ideal family home was in many ways a learning experience, but one that allowed some wonderful flexibility.

"It's always different building for yourself," says Walker, who enjoyed the opportunity to experiment with design and materials. Now, "I'm getting more into the design work, which is a lot more satisfying."

Stepping through the oak front doors, visitors find themselves in a double-height, traditionally themed foyer, which helps transition from the classic architecture outside

Customized Comfort

Arts and Crafts meets Scottish manor in a style built to suit a young family

BY JENNIFER BLYTH PHOTOS JO ANN RICHARDS



The kitchen, complete with eating area (below) is a contemporary space with natural accents: brushed-nickel hardware, granite countertops, travertine tile and jatoba wood cabinets.



flat-screen TV are flanked by wide built-in, jatoba bookshelves- the darker tones and heavier materials anchoring the room amid the loft 11-foot ceilings.

to the more contemporary living area, a gradual shift as one moves from west to east through the home. This is an impressive space., reaching up to the exposed beams along the second floor's vaulted ceilings. "You look up to the rafters above and get to feel the full effect of the entry," says Walker.

From the roomy dining room table, the view of the red-toned exterior siding and weighty granite prompted walker to repeat similar elements inside. "I wanted to be able to sit here having dinner and look out at the stonework that I loved," he says. Around the corner is the sunken family room. Here a gas fireplace and

Tempered glass display shelves and dark metal mesh doors disguise both the electronics equipment and Anya's Toys, and allows a more open feel than would have been offered by solid wood (the wire mesh also allows the remote controls to work without opening the doors)

Opposite the fireplace, French doors lead to the wraparound patio and hot tub, where many a night have been spent relaxing, overlooking the lights of Victoria in the distance. A step leads to the comfortable, contemporary kitchen and eating area, where an island, backed by a bank of jatoba cabinets, finished with brushed-nickel hardware and a subway tile backsplash, overlooks the living room. Polished Kashmir Gold granite countertops echo the travertine tile on the floor, and attractive contrast to the wide-plank hardwood throughout the rest of the main floor living area.

"My main goal was to create a cost comfortable living area that incorporated the kitchen and living room," says Joan Walker. As for practical matters, the deep island affords ample counter space, "which was the number one thing I wanted. I like having people sitting at the island."



Contrary to some modern homes where builders are opting for either full height cabinets or glassed in illuminated display space, the Walkers opted for a bulkhead, partially to accommodate ductwork in the kitchen's nine-foot-high ceilings, but also for the clean lines it affords.

Through the kitchen in the room pantry, mudroom and laundry area, likely the envy of many families, yet it's the one area Walker, in hindsight, would have done differently – or at least the decision not to heat the tile floor, which can be chilly on the feet, he admits.

Maintaining the traditional feel to the home without sacrificing energy efficiency was made easier thanks to the Euroline windows, which boast excellent thermal qualities. They also help with heat control on sunny days, Walker Notes. Further



TOP LEFT Built-in jatoba wook bookshelves flank the sunken living room's gas fireplace ABOVE and BOTTOM LEFT The master suiteboasts six-foot-high windows and a stunning edge-grain-fir sliding closet.

efficiencies – not to mention comfort – were ensured with the high efficiency gas furnace and heat pump, along with in-floor heating in the kitchen and ensuite.

Upstairs, via a wide staircase inset with small halogen lights in the risers, are the bedrooms and walker's office. Adding weight to the lofty peaked ceiling are mahogany –stained fir rafters, milled from wood on the property, and complemented by jatoba doors and banister inset with wrought iron spindles.

Tucked into the northwest corner of the house is Walker's spacious office, surprisingly cosy thanks to the gabled roomline and details such as the food floor. In a nod to the property's original cottage, "just to bring a little of the history here," he says.

After work, a relaxing getaway awaits in the upstairs master suit, where eight-foot-edge-grain fir sliding closet doors and heavy chocolate brown drapes framing the six-foot windows lend warmth and texture to the contemporary space. No afterthought, the doorless ensuite runs the width of the bedroom, anchored by a stunning tempered glass-topped floating maple cabinet in a silky-smooth, butternut stain.

Thrilled with the look of the counter, Walker repeated the glass in the shower surround, for a sleek – not to mention easy-to-clean result that wouldn't have been possible with traditional tile.

Past the double sinks and the cosy-on-the-toes heated travertine tile floors is the requisite soaker tub, surrounded by expansive windows for a true outside-in feel. The effect was intentional. "The focus is on the view," Walker explains. And, for practical purposes, the ensuite not only boast a separate toilet area and built in stereo system, but also a much appreciated programmable thermostat, meaning the room is perfectly cosy when the Walkers rise in the morning, but isn't heated unnecessarily at other times.

Recollecting his earlier observation about this latest home possibly being his and Joan's last, if it's up to Chris Walker, don't bet on it. "This was a lot of fun," he says, and grins.

