**Vacation Home Restoration: Restoring the E. J. Sooley house in Heart’s Delight, Newfoundland, population 700, was a labour of love for Ken Sooley and his sister Sharon Nisbet.**

The house is built on land purchased by their great-great-grandfather in 1860. Their grandfather, Edward John Sooley, built the current house in the late 1930s. It  overlooks Trinity Bay, on Newfoundland’s northeastern coast.

Ken and Sharon took over the home’s care in the early 1990s. The first of several renovations began in 1997, drawing on the expertise of carpenter Jerry Burton. The E. J. Sooley house, like many outport houses, is one-storey built simply with readily accessible materials and a wooden clapboard exterior. Like many traditional English-Newfoundland homes, the 1930s version of the house had a central hallway with three bedrooms on one side, a kitchen with pantry and porch (an anteroom before you enter the main house) and a parlour on the other side.

Restoring an old house means making choices. The house’s footprint is still 900 sq. ft. but its interior was adapted to accommodate some amenities. It now has electric baseboard heaters and an indoor bathroom, situated where an air forced furnace used to be in the centre of the house. “In hindsight, I would probably have had the bathroom added onto the house,” notes Sharon. Their first choice for new interior paint colours had a disappointing “Pioneer Village feel,” Sharon noted. They repainted the house in the colours it wears today.

A trip back to Newfoundland in 2000 inspired Ken to found CapeRace. The company provides tourist accommodations in historic Newfoundland houses, including the E. J. Sooley house, as well as “cultural and culinary adventures.”

Ken’s experience restoring the family home, as well as other traditional houses for CapeRace, taught him important lessons. “Don’t throw anything out, as you don’t appreciate what you have until you are finished,” he advises. Remnants of original linoleum, old window glass and vintage light bulbs found new life in the E. J. Sooley house, as did the pine wood found under the house. Jerry used it to rebuild the home’s porch, the ‘linney’. Ken cautions that restoration is a “calculated risk. We budget for the worst.”

“Although the kitchen sink is original, it is quirky,” Sharon notes. The kitchen has a vintage 1940s stove, but a modern refrigerator. “Other than the beds and a new sofa and chair, all of the ‘hard’ furniture is the furniture used by our grandparents, acquired over their lifetime. It ranges from the 1920s to the 1960s.” The linens, curtains, pots, pans, and tableware are all new, but with a retro design.

“When we first fixed up the house and came to stay, we had several people comment on how good it was to see a light on at night in the old house again. The house holds a special place in my heart,” Sharon states.

***Text by J. Lynn Fraser, Photography by Donna Griffin, As Seen In Canadian Home Trends Magazine Summer 2014***

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