

Elegant Home Had Historic Start

# Quaint Coach House Now Transformed

By DOROTHY WROTONOWSKI

There are really very few Cinderella stories regardless of fairy tales and fiction.

Things that start with humble beginnings are more than likely to stay that way.

When it comes to houses this is especially true. In fact, in this country, even the stately mansions are apt to deteriorate and be used as something entirely different than the family life for which they were built.

Sometimes, though very rarely, the opposite is true.

A building of humble beginnings is transformed into something quite beautiful. Such is the home of Mr. and Mrs. R. J. Bower at 1613 Rockland Avenue.

This home which is reached by a hedged, winding lane started out in life as a coach house and barn. In earlier years it also served as a garage, sleeping quarters for Chinese gardeners and a vegetable storage house.

The property on which the house stands, now so close to the city, goes back into the history of Victoria. It was part of the Peters subdivision in 1851 and the first house to

the North was built by a brother of Mr. Peters—the owner—in 1851. It was sold to Cuyler Edland before the house was completed.

It was in 1904 when Mr. James Alexander Mitchell built another house. The coach house on the property and the carriage was used jointly by the Edland and Mitchell families for a horse pasture.

During the Mitchell period the property was known as Parly.

In 1920 the property changed hands when it was bought by the late David James Angus. His carried out extensive improvements to the house.

During the Angus tenure, one of the Angus sons, Dr. John says that the barn housed the Chinese gardeners, the family car, vegetables, pigeons in the loft and chickens in a room built on the south side.

John Angus says he remembers as a boy that the pigeons were a great annoyance to the late Hobart Molson.

Hobart Molson would send messages to the Angus family to keep their pigeons at home so they would not roost on his roof. The messages went back (not from the boys, John and David) that Hobart Molson could disparage those pigeons if he didn't like what they did to his roof.

Peters says all this background contributes a little to the almost unbelievable charm of the place. The grounds of two and a half acres, are set far back from the road, giving a deep sense of privacy. The sweeping green lawns set with grained oaks, and a variety of fruit trees—one very old and spreading Italian plum—gives the place an old-world feeling.

And the sweeping view, from eastward right through south to west—along the sea and across-sloped Olympics—it was in the early 1850s that the solidly built old barn set on solid foundations of granite was first converted into a modern dwelling by Mr. and Mrs. J. G. Austin.

The Austins enclosed their renovations in the 150 square feet of space on the ground floor.

One wall came down to make room for the spacious living room with fireplace. A large window on the south wall and large windows to the west facing onto a large patio enclosed with a high wall to the North were installed.

The granary became the dining room, the kitchen remained what it was originally and a west and north room both became bedrooms. The bathroom opened off the hall connecting the bedrooms.

Since Dick and Doreen Ewer purchased the place five years ago a real transformation has taken place.

Outside the grounds have been developed—lawns now extend to property boundaries and shrubs and flowers abound.

Inside a still greater charm has come about. The kitchen has been remodelled with Colonial style cupboards—rainless steel sink, attractive bright wall paper and an old fashioned ceiling-high colour cupboard removed.

The west bedroom with French doors opening to the outside is now an attractive den. The north bedroom is a dressing room.

pannelled walls and brick fireplace painted a soft seafoam green. This color the Bowers have carried throughout all rooms of the house, even to the carpeting of the stairway and halls.

Of special interest in the living room is a low, glass topped table made from a hand-carved, burnished screen and the oil paintings on the walls attesting to Dick Bower's artistic ability.

Also in the dining room there is a striking oil of African dancers by this artist.

Another major project undertaken by the Bowers was making the upstairs (the original loft) livable.

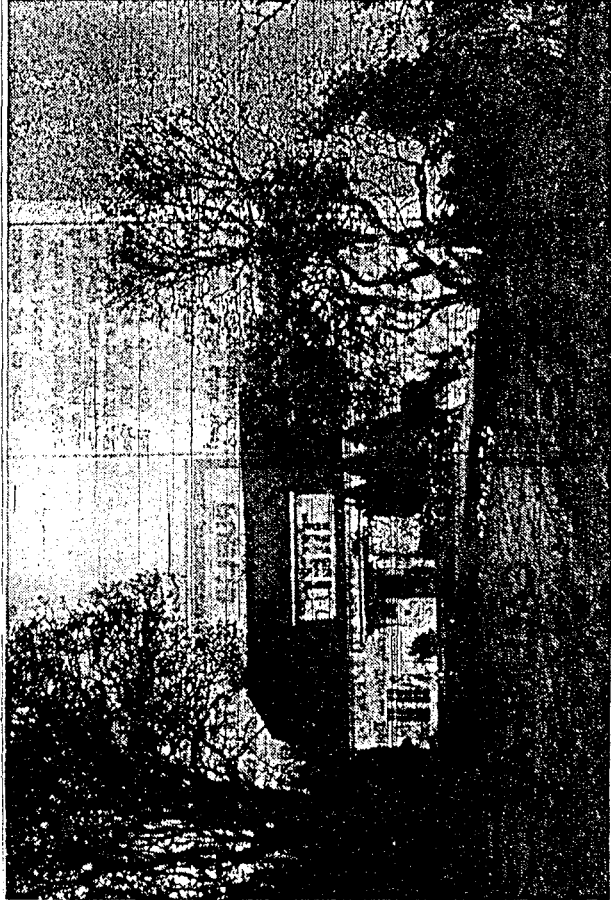
That the loft-housed pigeons at one time is making the Bowers toy with the idea of naming the place The Mews. There are four bedrooms, bathroom and laundry now on the upper level. A large window facing west from one of the bedrooms improves the general appearance of the front of the house.

In the south bedroom a lovely old rosewood high-backed early American bed is covered with a colorful silk and satin patchwork quilt.

Another feature of the new elegant house is the lights. Ship's lights to go with the wrought iron door hinges, Venetian lights, Spanish lights and Chinese lights. And I almost forget a lovely high-backed oak ladder chair with seat cover of African gazelle in the living room.

And in case you are likely to forget the origin of this house there is an old English painting of a chestnut horse above the fireplace.

You can have the privilege of seeing this charming house for yourself if you join the Art-Gallery House Tour on Saturday, May 11. For more information phone Mrs. Charles Lum, 477-2606 or the Art Gallery, 384-3123.



Mrs. Malcolm B. Anderson of the Art Gallery House Tour committee pictured on the lawn in front of the R. J. Bower home which was once a coach house.—(Kinsman)