


Wooden crafts made by local artisans enhance the homey feel of Hipditch House. Since there aren't many antiques stores, most of the nautical knick-knacks were found at church sales and markets. Chair, pillows, Ikea; lamp, HomeSense.





MIND THE STEP


Pared-down nautical style smooths the rough edges of a historic East Coast home

HISTORY IN North America is often confined to areas that have just hit the three-digit mark in years, so when the opportunity arises to walk through Canadian streets first set out in 1583, we jump at the chance. That's the thinking of Ken Sooley and his sister Sharon Nisbet's purchase of Hipditch House, a historic home in St. John's, Newfoundland, that's now part of their company, CapeRace Cultural Adventures (see "Heart in Hand" in our Summer 2008 issue for more). CapeRace's 10-day touring program around the province features stays in homes owned by the Sooley family, providing a

unique way to travel and explore the region. Hipditch House, located on the slopes of Signal Hill in the Battery District, the city's oldest, most picturesque neighbourhood, offers visitors a chance to walk the ancient winding streets overlooking the North Atlantic's shipping lines. Found while on a trip to one of the company's other properties, Ken's impulsive purchase of Hipditch led to a whirlwind renovation that knit together the home's four additions and revealed its inner landmark.

"There was a total of five pieces to the house, and at one point there were 20 people living in it, but there was never a

BY REBECCA ZAMON PHOTOGRAPHY BY DONNA GRIFFITH PRODUCED BY ANN MARIE FAVOT



Binoculars sit on windowsills throughout the house, so that visitors can watch the ships' slow entry into the harbour. "You could sit all night by the windows and watch boats going in and out," says Ken and Sharon's father, Fred. Stool, Ikea.

view,” explains Ken. “We took down one wall, and, just like that, could see the water. We took down another, and we had a whole panorama of the city.”

Inspired by the ocean on the other side of the windows, Ken and Sharon decided to bring the fresh feel of nautical style inside, setting the beadboard walls awash in white paint and weathering the wooden floor for a truly rustic look. Accenting with a rich blue on doors and trim, it didn't take long for this house to get in shipshape. Added touches, such as the Mind the Step stencils on the small ledges that make up for uneven floors and ceilings, lend a more eclectic Maritime chic to the space.

And lucky for their budget, the nautical look they sought came in the form of cheap and cheerful pieces, like the metal



Ken added a deck to maximize the views, but because of the home's narrowness, he also created a catwalk (seen at the back). Behind Hipditch House lies a piece of St. John's dark history in Gibbet Hill, where convicted criminals were hanged and tossed into Dead Man's Pond below.

Inspired by the ocean, Ken and Sharon brought the fresh feel of nautical style inside

lantern found at a nearby yard sale that wouldn't have looked out of place in a lighthouse keeper's bedroom, or the kitchen table's director chairs. “Don't they look like they could be on the deck of a ship?” asks Sharon with a laugh. The utilitarian style also lends itself admirably to a home with a decided lack of closet space; hooks, including cleats found in a boat that act as organizers in the bathroom, make an appearance wherever space allows.

References to Hipditch's history and setting in St. John's are scattered throughout the home's rooms. In the kitchen, an enlarged photograph taken by Ken shows what the view would look like if there was a window there instead of a wall, while the



if you go...

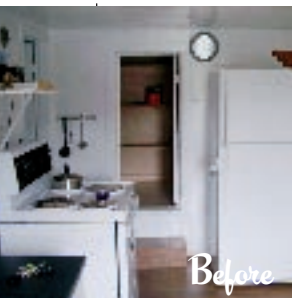
ST. JOHN'S

*
Living Rooms in Murray Premises has the run of a 19th-century fishing warehouse, filling the enormous space with beautiful kitchen pieces and tablewares. (888) 753-7666, livingrooms.ca

*
The Craft Council of Newfoundland and Labrador runs a shop



Bright tones against the white backdrop make an uplifting impact



Before

displaying the gorgeous wares of local craftspeople. (709) 753-2749, craftcouncil.nl.ca

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Magnum & Steins is a well-appointed restaurant offering (what else!) daily seafood specials. (709) 576-6500, magnumandsteins.ca

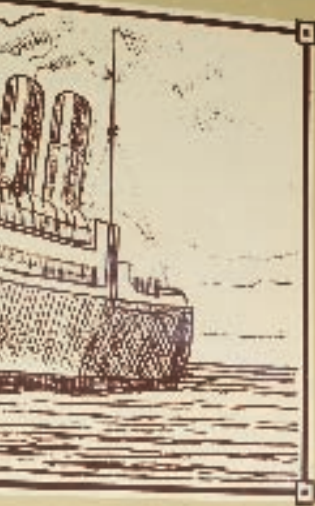


In St. John's, you can find fish anywhere—even in these fish-shaped gingerbread cookies from Auntie Crae's. In the kitchen (above), unpainted wooden cabinetry is a complement to the bright palette.





In the traditional Newfoundland set-up, the kitchen is where the family eats and gathers for celebrations, inspiring the East Coast's famed 'kitchen parties.' A daybed is always available for those in need of a quick nap. Chairs, fabric on table, Ikea.



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bookshelf in the den is filled with Newfoundland-themed tomes and a miniature wooden boat built by a craftsman in Heart's Delight. The oversized sign in the den came from the wrecking yard of the paint factory it advertises, and the bedroom's photos are replicas of ones taken of the home in the 1930s. Guests on the CapeRace tour often exclaim over the hidden gems they find tucked in corners and the information they come across while here.

"This house has seen so much," says Ken. "It's a living testament to Maritime life." ❖



In the den (opposite), the salvaged factory sign hangs above a slipcovered chair that invites visitors to stay a while. The industrial-style locker hides magazines, and plays up the chair's red accents. Locker, Ikea; chair, Sears; lamp, HomeSense. Ken had the bedroom pillowcases made to resemble signal flags from his collection. Blanket, cushion, Ikea.



Before

The home's easygoing spirit reflects the owners' love of coastal living



Before

The once ho-hum bathroom gets a nautical lift thanks to whitewashed wood walls and vintage signal flags, which can be found throughout Hipditch House. The legend hanging from the cleat lets guests in on the meaning of each flag.