

# ‘Will you build one like that for me?’

Neo-Georgian mansion built in 1912 by architect Eustace Bird stands the test of time

THE LISTING

Asking price: \$9.28-million

Taxes: \$46,018.52 (2016)

Lot size: 123.5 by 340 feet

Agents: Janet Lindsay, Chestnut Park Real Estate Ltd., and Elli Davis, Royal LePage Real Estate Services Ltd.

CAROLYN IRELAND

The Back Story

Rosedale lore has it that businessman Gerald Strathy admired a particularly beautiful mansion built at the top of the Don Valley. The architect was the renowned Eustace Bird, who designed such landmark buildings as 2 King St. E., and the Sunbeam Incandescent Lamp Factory on Dufferin Street during his career. The stately red brick house Mr. Strathy admired at 5 Hawthorn Gardens was the architect’s own home. Mr. Strathy approached Mr. Bird with a request along the lines of, “Will you build one like that for me?” The Strathy house was positioned a little further along the same ridge at 32 Castle Frank Rd. and completed in 1912. Most of the neo-Georgian architectural details remain unchanged today. The 10-bedroom house is built into the hillside, with a circular drive at the front and a *porte-cochère* connecting the main house to the coach house. In the home’s early days, residents would climb into horse-drawn carriages under the shelter of the *porte-cochère*. Substantial blocks of white marble were built



Each of the house’s principal rooms was designed to feature a different type of hardwood.

into the corners so that the carriages wouldn’t damage the brick. The Strathy family christened their house Inchafray, which is also the name of a ruined Augustinian abbey in Scotland once patronized by Scottish kings. The house, with approximately 18,000 square feet of living space, stands on one acre of land. The gardens and terraces at the rear descend to a heavily-treed ravine that slopes down to the trails and paths along the Don River. The property remained in the Strathy Family until the late 1950s. It had two more owners before Brad Crompton and Shane Dunworth Crompton settled in

with their family about 20 years ago. The House Today The attention to fine classical details is evident as soon as guests pass through wrought iron gates onto the red cobblestone drive. The solid marble steps leading to the front door are flanked by Ionic columns, which in turn support an arched portico carved from Quebec marble. Inside is a foyer with marble floor and wainscoting before guests pass through into the grand foyer. A grand staircase leads to the second floor. Mr. Crompton says he was

drawn to the house because it was so well-preserved. It had been updated through the years with new heating and plumbing systems, but the original architectural details were virtually untouched and the previous owners had all taken care to keep the home in good condition. He was able to learn a lot about Mr. Bird’s intentions from the architect’s drawings, which were still in the house. He points out, for example, that the plans called for various fine hardwoods throughout, including African oak, American oak and fruitwood. “There’s a different type of wood in each of the principal rooms.”

On the main floor, a long hallway lined with window leads to the large library, which holds the Cromptons’ collection of books and art. Two of the walls are lined with floor-to-ceiling bookshelves with glass doors. Mr. Crompton says the use of glass was for the protection of original volumes. The other walls are panelled in well-burnished wood. There’s also a wood-burning fireplace with a carved oak mantelpiece and marble surround. Doors lead to the solarium, which runs along the rear of the house. It has original terracotta tile flooring and French Doors that open to the large terrace. The formal living room overlooks the front garden. The fireplace has a pink Quebec marble mantelpiece carved in neoclassical style. Walls are panelled in carved oak with bevelled mirror inserts. Real estate agent Janet Lindsay of Chestnut Park Real Estate Ltd. points out that the original Georgian-style windows face the front of the house while the living room vistas also extend through the large windows in the solarium. “This is where you really appreciate the acre of land because you have garden views on both sides.” The formal dining room has a ceiling with intricate plaster work, windows on three sides and views into the ravine. The wood-panelled walls and fireplace provide a backdrop for the dining table, which seats 24 people. There’s also an adjoining butler’s pantry and a walk-in china and silver closet. Mr. Crompton says grandchildren of the Strathy family once

visited the house and shared childhood stories, including their memories of family meals around the same antique table. Throughout the principal rooms, the original hardwood floors have been restored and elaborate plaster ceilings remain intact. The renovated kitchen has the original hearth as its focal point. Today the brick hearth holds a modern gas stove top. The kitchen has built-in appliances and Jerusalem limestone floors and countertops. There’s an eat-in area and a separate breakfast room. Upstairs the second floor has a separate master bedroom wing. “We kept this part of the house for ourselves,” Mr. Crompton says. The master bedroom has hardwood floors and a fireplace with carved wood mantelpiece and a marble surround. There are his-and-hers bathrooms and dressing rooms and a room overlooking the gardens that once would have served as a summer sleeping room. “They would have moved their beds out here and slept here,” he explains. The master wing also has a home office and an extra bedroom that can be used as a study or a baby’s room. The kids’ wing provides rooms for sleeping, studying and watching television, with three more large bedrooms and a bathroom on the second floor. A doorway leads to the servants’ wing, with more bedrooms, a bathroom, a balcony and a rear staircase. Ms. Lindsay points out that the eight bedrooms on the second floor can easily be reconfigured to suit a new family. Any of the rooms can function as bedroom, guest room, office, den or study. The third floor has a 1970s-era party room, complete with a disco dance floor, mirrored walls, a Tiffany glass ceiling and an elaborate lighting system. Mr. Crompton says that before his time the house had been used as a film set, including for the 1983 HBO movie *Between Friends*, starring Elizabeth Taylor and Carol Burnett. The lower level has above-ground windows and doors on the ravine side of the house. There’s a billiard room with a walk-out to the swimming pool. There’s also an indoor spa, a wine cellar and his-and-hers exercise rooms.



The house sits on a one-acre plot of land, which the current owners hired landscape architect Mark Hartley to revamp.

The coach house provides a double garage and a nanny flat above. The Cromptons hired landscape architect Mark Hartley to revamp the gardens and design an inground pool with a water feature. At the front of the house, the tall trees, brick walls and wrought-iron gates surrounding the property give the lawn and gardens a feeling of seclusion. One of the older magnolia trees in Rosedale shades the lawn, and a row of apple trees stand alongside the coach house.

“You can come out here with a glass of wine before dinner and close the gates and it’s like being in your own park,” Mr. Crompton says. He adds that the exterior of the house reminds him of the country houses designed by the well-known British architect Edwin Lutyens. “There are lovely sightlines everywhere,” he says. Ms. Lindsay notes that the house is designed with a low profile so that much of its size is hidden from the street. “When you enter the gates, you see it’s an estate.”



The Best Feature The grand foyer and hall have been a favourite place for guests to congregate over the years, with walls panelled in rich wood, a plaster ceiling and a wood floor in a herringbone pattern. Mr. Crompton says the grand foyer and the connection between rooms created a good layout for the large parties and charity events the couple held over the years. “You never feel like you’re in a hallway,” Mr. Crompton says. “Everything flows together.” In the gallery-like hall, there’s

an original built-in bar, which can be opened up for festivities. The staircase to the second floor has a banister and posts in elaborately-carved wood, with spiralling turned spindles in a style called “candy cane.” “For us it was a great house,” Mr. Crompton says, pointing out that the family had three kids, a nanny a live-in housekeeper and dogs. He would like the house to have new stewards who will also appreciate its heritage. “Our aspiration is that another family will enjoy it.”