

The house by the side of South Avenue

In the era of McMansions,
bigger is not always better

by Nancy Robinson

Two axioms currently appear to be the cornerstone of the housing and real estate industry — location, location, and bigger is better.

What then can you make of a house that is located on the busiest street in new Canaan, in the midst of multifamily houses, scenically location across from a parking lot and on a lot of a mere one-third of an acre?

What you have is the South Avenue home of Ron and Sully Seeger. The renovation of this house generated enthusiastic comments, gawkers, a procession of slow traffic and the beseeching of local groups to include it on their house tours.

For a number of reasons having to do with availability of land, the start of retirement among baby boomers or just the endless cycle familiar to Realtors, there appear to be some changes afoot. There is an increased interest in living close to the heart of New Canaan and the renovation, rather than the tearing down of older homes, is making a resurgence. Nowhere can that be seen more beautifully than at this picturesque home only one block from town.

“We frequently have people stopping and peering over the fence, or coming to our door and asking were we found the Victorian planters, or just stopping on the sidewalk and looking around,” confided Mrs. Seeger.

And with good reason. From the inviting front porch filled with wicker furniture to the glimpse of the two-story cottage in the back, this is, in the words of Mrs. Seeger, “A piece of paradise.”

Mrs. Seeger continued, “People are coming back to the idea of living in town. It’s a great way to live. We invite friends over, have a drink on the patio and then walk to dinner or the movies.”

“My husband had suggested the move and I was a little reluctant because we had always lived in the country,” added Mrs. Seeger. “However, we love it and don’t even hear the traffic.” The tantalizing glimpse that walkers and drivers can discern for a few seconds unveils only a fraction of what lies behind the doors of this three-story Victorian.

The front door opens to reveal a stained



The South Avenue home of Ronald and Sully Seeger.

glass window to the right that sets the colors for the downstairs rooms. The original stairway was moved back and the ceiling removed to create a two-story foyer enhanced by a glittering golden chandelier. The living room is decorated in pink with tones being picked up from the floral carpet, which again reflects the pink and blue of the stained glass in the foyer.

Mrs. Seeger’s collection of cranberry glass is displayed to its best advantage against the white walls and the elaborate fireplace.

Her eye for even the smallest detail is demonstrated in the combination of pink

flowers and a blue candy dish that complements and duplicates the carpet’s colors.

“I’ve always been able to visualize how to decorate,” explained Mrs. Seeger.

Her career as a Realtor has also offered her the opportunity to view many homes over the years, which gave her a clear sense of what she wanted and how it would look. During a tour of the house, Mrs. Seeger pointed out what she considered her decorating flaws. The less talented among us would have taken justifiable pride in creating these “flaws.”

Purchased during an auction in Wilton

and reupholstered is a pink Victorian love-seat, placed in front of a bay window and flanked by two antique chairs.

Intrigued by arches rather than the traditional straight-lined entranceway, the Seegers opened up the wall to the dining room by utilizing an archway to connect the two rooms.

Another bay window in the dining room offers a view of the carefully planned garden. The blue shade in the oriental carpet is picked up in the curtains.

A wall was also taken down to create a small, but compact library across from the dining room. Mrs. Seeger made use of the space as a place for a small desk and shelves.

The natural maple floors lead to the hugely expanded kitchen that includes a dining area. This room also shows the knowledge and taste of the home owner, along with her willingness to accept the suggestions of experts.

“Drapes would be overwhelming, so we went with plantation blinds,” explained Mrs. Seeger.

The walls were done using an Egyptian process that involves four layers of paint and looks as though a putty knife was drawn through it, but is surprisingly smooth to the touch.

Originally planning to do the kitchen in a burgundy, Mrs. Seeger deferred to the suggestion of the artist/painter, who suggested a light moss green.

The harvest cream granite island and cherry cabinets complete the kitchen. The ongoing discussions with the builder resulted in the addition of two steps to separate the great room from the kitchen.

If the lady of the house can identify one room as her favorite she would have to claim the great room with its fireplace, wet bar and red oriental rug as her choice.

“The dining room however, is my daughter’s favorite,” she acknowledged.

Going up the staircase to the second floor, the Seegers point out that the railings are original. Overlooking South Avenue is a room that Sully Seeger has made into her office.

“It seems a little out of place to have a computer and modern technology in a Victorian house, but you have to make some concessions to the times,” Mrs. Seeger admitted.

The spacious hallway, which extends the entire length of the house, goes past a guest bathroom which Mrs. Seeger claims with the eye of a perfectionist “has too much white in it.” It’s an opinion that probably only she would believe.

The spacious master bedroom is located over and is the same size as the great room on the first floor. Pointing to a pair of comfortable chairs and large round table, the couple agrees that his is the perfect place to start the morning with a cup of coffee.



The garden and landscaping make it difficult to believe that the home occupies a lot that is only one-third of an acre.

The master bath almost defies description. A desert rose marble floor and a jacuzzi along with a double sink and dressing table make up this master bathroom with approximately the proportions of a good sized bedroom. The innovative decoration and beautiful sense of style extended upward to the third floor, which is perfect for when the family and grandchildren visit. It also contains Sully Seeger’s favorite feature, “an entire wall of cedar closets.”

It is also the location of an entirely black and white bathroom. The color scheme is carried out in the floor tile, shower curtain and white wicker elephant table and chair with a black and white flowered cushion.

While the Seeger women may have their favorite rooms within the main house, the Seeger men have claimed the carriage house in the backyard as their own.

At the far end of the property is Ron Seeger’s retreat and work area. Done over in a very masculine “Ralph Lauren” style with “lots of input from my husband,” the two-story house with its dark red carpet, dark green walls and white trim offers a wide-screen TV, large table for card games and a loft with an office that overlooks the carefully landscaped yard.

Between the main house and the carriage house is a brick patio with lounge chairs, patio and fountain surrounded by meticulously landscaped gardens. It’s hard to believe that all this beauty can be found in one-third of an acre.

The curious and the envious can catch a glimpse of the beauty beyond the trellis gate. And it’s easy to be envious of what the Seegers refer to as “The Enchanted Cottage.”