

project description

Type: Two additions with major interior and exterior renovations.

Contractor: **Kreider & Diller Builders, Inc.**
(see ad on p. 31)

Trade Partners:
Charles A. Erisman Inc., Asphalt Paving (see ad p. 32)
Cloister's Flooring America (see ad p. 38)
Countryside Roofing & Exteriors, LLC (see ad p. 32)
Diversified Plumbing (see ad p. 40)
Martin Appliance (see ad p. 36)
Nolt Electric, Inc. (see ad p. 34)

Scope: The clients purchased the property, a 3-acre lot overlooking the Conestoga River, because of its breathtaking view, the character of the lovely 1 1/2-story stone home, as well as its proximity to family members. The size of the lot and of the house and layout of the rooms left a great deal of room for expansion and improvement to meet the family's needs.

The clients wanted a luxurious and spacious first floor master suite at one end of the house, with the children's rooms on the second floor at the other end of the house. The small, cramped kitchen was enlarged to create a lovely, bright and open kitchen space overlooking the Conestoga River with family dining and sitting areas. The old breezeway was enlarged and turned into a pantry, entry hall and mudroom with an exposed stone wall. Combining the creative design of the client's architect with cost-effective value engineering of the builder enabled the clients to achieve their goals.

The stone on the house was thought to be a veneer over a frame wall, but actually the stone was laid in between and in front of the framing. Because the stone turned out to be 12" thick, its removal took a lot longer where new openings were created. A combination of engineered and dimensional wood beams were used to open up load bearing walls in the existing house and make the spaces of the existing house flow seamlessly into the additions.

With the homeowner's permission, the project was entered into the Building Industry Association of Lancaster County 2014 Remodelers Awards of Excellence competition where it was awarded the winning entry in the *Addition* category, *Division 5*.



turning a cottage into a home on the banks of the Conestoga River

For most home shoppers, location is very important...but not necessarily a deal breaker. For home shoppers with three young children, the number of bedrooms, bathrooms, and house square footage is almost always the most critical criteria. For Amy and Oliver, their priorities were different—LOCATION was EVERYTHING! Not only did they have a specific requirement as to the location—on the banks of the Conestoga River—but they also wanted some additional land beyond the standard lot size. As for the house, well, that was secondary. So they thought.

While it was the lot size and its location that initially attracted their attention, the little stone cottage that sat on the site had a warm charm that they both fell in love with. And although the home needed to be expanded and renovated to accommodate the family of five, there certainly was the space to do it. What couldn't be changed, what they didn't want to lose, was that unique cottage character. Whatever they did had to complement the look and feel of the cottage.

As you'll learn in the following interview and see in the photos, the homeowners certainly got their wishes. This beautiful

project was completed by the award-winning firm of Kreider & Diller Builders, Inc. of Lancaster. In fact, this very project was recognized by the Building Industry Association of Lancaster County in its 2014 Remodelers Awards of Excellence competition with the winning entry in the Addition category, Division 5.

In addition to Amy and Oliver, joining our interview is Don Diller, President of Kreider & Diller Builders, along with Project Manager, Bill Keays.

What can you tell us about your home's history?

Oliver: It dates back to the 1930's. My understanding is that it was built for a widower farmer who was retiring and didn't want to live in the big family farmhouse anymore. His eldest son had the home built on this 3-acre lot which was part of his father's farm. Considering its original size—single-story, one-bedroom—it was more of a cottage than a typical home of the day.

Amy: That big farmhouse, incidentally, is actually still standing. In fact, it's for sale up the street.



BEFORE

Oliver: After the father died, the home remained empty for a number of years until it was sold in the '70's. The new owners needed more space for their family and built out the second floor to accommodate two additional but small bedrooms. That family lived here for 40 years.

And you've been here since 2010. Tell us how that came to be.

Oliver: Although I grew up here in the Conestoga Valley area, graduate school took me to Texas and we lived there until our move to Lancaster in 2002. Our first home here in the county was actually purchased online and it proved to be a good start for us here. As time went on, we started looking for properties with some acreage, and we wanted to be along the river in Conestoga Valley.



Amy: And we were diligent—we were always looking. As soon as anything with land came on the market, we took a look. All together, I bet we looked at 25, maybe 30 properties.

Oliver: As it happened, I was online with Google Maps one day looking at the Conestoga River. From there I went to a Lancaster County property website that showed all the properties along the river. What caught my attention was one that had a lot size much larger than the others and it was on a quiet street. Eventually, that property was listed for sale.

Amy: Within no time, we were there walking the property admiring the home's cottage look, the size of the lot, the tall trees, and its great location and privacy.

Oliver: It was November at the time and the leaves were already down. When we walked around the back and saw the river, we were hooked. With that setting, as long as we had a decent house to work with, we wanted to make it work.

Amy: And as it turned out, it did. And we are so thankful!

We understand that you bought the home with the plan to expand. Please elaborate.

Oliver: Yes, it was definitely part of the plan. With three kids and only three bedrooms, we thought we wanted to have another bedroom at some point.

Amy: The upstairs bedrooms were very small so we had the boys start out with bunk beds. But because of the sloping ceilings—again, this was only a one and one-half story home—even our youngest was starting to hit his head on the ceiling while sitting up on the top bunk. The downstairs was pretty basic—a small living room, a small dining room, a bathroom, and a tiny kitchen. All the closets were very small as well. Doing an expansion project was definitely in the plans.

Don: Given the state of things in the '30s with the Depression going on, priorities were not put on kitchens, closets or bedrooms.

Oliver: We kind of had an 8-year timeline with doing an addition. At the end

of 8 to 10 years, we wanted to have an addition or two completed along with some landscaping to dress things up. We started the design process after living here for two years. It took us quite awhile to think things through, but we were intent on getting the design process right. We wanted to be extremely happy with the final results and didn't want to run the risk of being disappointed because we rushed through things.

You were working with an architect?

Oliver: Yes, we were working with Charlie Yohe of Yohe Architecture & Design here in Lancaster. While we looked at a lot of different options, it was important that we kept the cottage look and feel. We wanted to expand without really expanding the look of the house. Our challenge to the architect was to take something that we think is incredible and make it even better. That is why we struggled so much with getting the design just right.

Amy: We love the cottage look and wanted a design that would keep the integrity and feel of the cottage. The additional space needed to be designed in such a way we didn't lose that charm.

How did Don Diller of Kreider & Diller Builders get involved?

Oliver: We decided to put the project out to bid and through the recommendation of our architect, we made a short list of bidders and Kreider & Diller was one of them.

What was it that swayed you in the selection of Kreider & Diller?

Oliver: In addition to the bid process, we invited each prospective builder to sit down and talk with us about the project. In addition, and equally important, we wanted to hear about their company and what they stood for. Right away the message we were picking up from Don Diller was how much pride they take in their work and how committed they are in producing a



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great finished product—a product that would hold up over time. Since we view this as our forever home, that really resonated with us.

Amy: Even before we sat down with Don, we knew of Kreider & Diller's stellar

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reputation. We felt very good about that. During a walk through before the bidding, we also had the opportunity to meet Don's project manager, Bill Keays and job estimator, Rich Wallin. Just meeting those guys—the depth of their questions, their listening skills, what

they had to say—was very reassuring. In fact, it was huge to us. It was critical that whoever we brought in understood what we were looking for.

Oliver: Don and his team were incredibly engaged from the very beginning. They asked five times more questions than any of the other bidders—

making sure they had a complete understanding of what we were looking for. As far as our selection was concerned, it was a very easy decision.

Were the plans already completed?

Oliver: Yes, they were fully developed—we had a complete set. This was important because we wanted a complete pack-

age for the bidders—we wanted a true apples-to-apples comparison. After we had the bids, we sat down and looked at the costs and compared them to our budget. We then did a round of cost-saving sessions with Kreider & Diller (who by now was by far the front runner in the selection process) along with our architect, Charlie. We then refined the plans to get it within our budget. The guys from Kreider & Diller were extremely helpful in coming up with cost-saving ideas—the use of one product over the one originally specified, moving this wall here rather than there, and little tweaks like that. Although these small changes didn't compromise the overall design, significant savings were realized.

Don: Our cost-saving brainstorming was definitely a group effort between Oliver and Amy, Charlie, and our team. We engineered it the best that we could without compromising the integrity and the look of the job.

Oliver: We all sat down and went through the plans in detail. What if we changed this? What if we did this? What if we used this instead? It was a very collaborative effort without any egos getting in the way.

Don: In the end, we had quite a list of changes that resulted in some significant cost reductions.

So now that the plans were refined and ready to go, tell us about the construction phase.

Amy: Construction started on August 1st and we were in by Christmas. Actually, we moved in on a Friday night just before Christmas Eve that Monday. What a wonderful Christmas present!

Oliver: We were able to move in with family during the construction. We moved out completely.



Amy: We thought briefly about staying and putting in a modified kitchen downstairs, but it wouldn't have worked. There was just too much going on in so many different places throughout the house.

With you staying in the neighborhood, how often did you check in to see the progress?

Amy: Every day at the beginning. I

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addition to our drop-ins and phone calls, Kreider & Diller had regularly-scheduled status meetings set up with us and Charlie every other week. It was a very effective way to keep us up to date on where they were with the schedule and what was coming up next.

Amy: I really appreciated how welcome everyone made me



couldn't help stopping in to check things out. It was very exciting!

Oliver: If I didn't come over, I would talk to Bill or one of the Kreider & Diller guys on the phone nearly every day.

Bill: Having you both so close by was actually very helpful. Questions would come up or decisions needed to be made and having such great access kept things moving. We actually encourage homeowner visits—it provides another set of eyes.

Oliver: The communication was absolutely great throughout the project. In

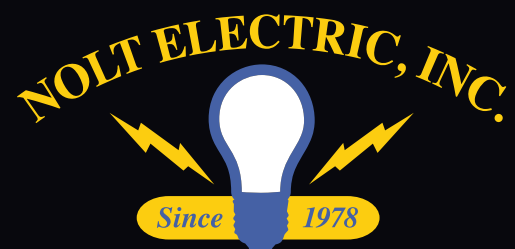
feel whenever I dropped in. Scott Silvis, the job Superintendent especially, we had a great relationship. It was just fun to come over and catch up on the day. And in addition to him being a great tradesman, he was a great problem solver and idea man. As an example,

one day he asked me if we could stop by so he could offer a suggestion. In the plans, our pantry's entry was going through what was an original exterior stone wall—a wall that had to have been a good 15 inches thick. A door was to be installed at the entry. Given the depth of the wall, Scott suggested that we do away with the door and just keep it open for aesthetic reasons. He was right...the depth of that doorway proved to be an attractive feature. It's practical too—no door to open and close.

Oliver: I was surprised to see how much time Scott actually spent on-site. From working in construction, I know that it's not unusual for the job superintendent to stop in sometime during the morning and then rush off to the next jobsite. Scott was almost always here overseeing things. And if he wasn't, someone from the company was—there was always a Kreider & Diller representative onsite.

Don: With a job like this, with so much going on, we felt that it was very important to stay on top of things.

Oliver: Another thing that I wanted to highlight that we really liked was the fact that Kreider & Diller has many of their own craftsmen. Jim Welk, for instance, did the trim work in the kitchen and Adam Diller and Erik Fries did the



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Don: Finishers are always important...we take great pride in ours.

Amy: I believe that the project has the feel that we wanted based not only on the design but also because of the job Kreider & Diller did. The care, the time, and the finishing touches—personal touches—are why we have what we have. Their commitment to their work and to us made it all happen.

You've been very complimentary of the Kreider & Diller staff, what about their team of subcontractors who also participated? Did any of them stand out?

Amy: We worked more closely with some than others, but they were all very excellent. Like I said earlier, they really made me feel welcome whenever I showed up. Everyone was so personable and they took their time in answering my questions. They were all very professional.

Oliver: We spent a lot of time with Leonard Nolt of Nolt Electric developing plans for lights, switches and outlets. Determining where to put things is a major undertaking and Leonard was very helpful in guiding us. His onsite electrician, Greg, was equally outstanding.

Don: The plumber, Jason Huyett of Diversified Plumbing, did a great job—in some very challenging conditions. The type of structure that we have here with its thick, very thick stone walls and foundation, not to mention the limited crawl space underneath the additions, really complicated things. To Jason's credit, he was up to the

trim in the master suite. Their work was top shelf. That was part of the Kreider & Diller reputation that led us to them in the first place. We weren't disappointed—they delivered!



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challenge. The same applies to Greg, the electrician. He too was extremely resourceful in making things work.

Don: Another one that I have to bring up—probably the most important—is Charlie, the architect. What he did here, given the project's size and scope, was something special. And he did it all so seamlessly.

Oliver: I couldn't agree more. The fact that Charlie was able to give us all the additional space we wanted while staying true to the character of the original house is masterful. He maintained the low rooflines, consistent with the cottage. What we didn't want in the additions was something imposing and I think he nailed it.

Now that you've had time to live in it, is there anything that you would have done differently?

Oliver: It's been a year and half since the project was completed and I can honestly say there isn't anything I would change.

Amy: We thought things out pretty carefully. It took a lot of planning—a whole lot. So much so that we even considered moving. Our ongoing issue was trying to figure out how to add the extra space and stay within our budget without changing too much of the original home. It was no easy task.

What kept you hanging on?

Amy: The property, the privacy, the stone house. I loved it too much.

Oliver: Despite the obstacles, I knew we had to make this work. We both loved the stone cottage. And being on the





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river in a nice, secluded lot was just too good to walk away from.

Work on older homes generally produces a surprise or two once you start digging or knocking out walls. In this case, you did both. What surprises did you run into?

Don: You're right, in older homes like

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this one, there's no telling what you'll encounter once you start tearing things out. What we thought was a frame house with a stone veneer turned out to be the wrong assumption. When we started the demolition work and opened up the walls, we discovered that there is stone laid in between the studs—the full depth of the wall. The plaster walls just covered up the stone.

Oliver: We couldn't believe it. The place was built like a bomb shelter.

Amy: That explained why the interior of the house was always so quiet.

You couldn't hear anything from outside—even during a heavy rain!

Bill: In addition to the surprise in the walls, we also hit some rock digging the foundation for the master suite addition.

Amy: Honestly, we were afraid you'd be hitting even more rock than what you did. We were holding our breath during the entire time you were excavating.

Oliver: As it turned out, it wasn't as bad as we feared. We were very fortunate.



What advice do you have for homeowners who are thinking about doing a major project like this?

Oliver: I know that there are a lot of design-build companies out there where the builder actually does the design work in-house. For us it worked out great having an independent designer that we trusted and liked. He was extremely patient working with us. And to follow that up with a builder who was equally patient and trustworthy; who could really

deliver on the design—well, we felt like we were in great hands from start to finish. I'm not saying you couldn't have equal success with a single-source, design-build firm, I'm just saying that you need to feel good about who you're working with. I firmly believe that our lack of changes during construction was directly related to the extensive thought and planning that preceded the work. Both our designer and builder were exceptional planners.

Amy: My advice would be to stay patient. As I mentioned earlier, at one point we were questioning whether it was all worth it. Well, let me tell you that it IS worth it. Stick it out and don't settle. It'll work and you'll be so happy that you didn't throw in the towel. We couldn't be more pleased with the way things turned out. It's absolutely perfect!

And what reaction have you received from your friends and neighbors?

Oliver: The reaction has been very positive. For those that remember how it used to be, they are just blown away with the transformation. With the way the floor plan has opened up, we now have space for entertaining. We get a lot of compliments, especially on the bedroom with its high ceiling, the tall windows and the view of the river. It's very lush in the summer, but when the weather turns and the leaves are down, the view of the river is awesome.

Amy: And as happy as we are with the project, it's even more perfect because of the property that it sits on. It's doubtful that we would've gone through the expense of a project like this had it not been for the property and its beautiful setting. We're actually maximizing those views by foregoing window treatments.

Don: And speaking of expense, I think too many people today focus on the wrong thing—resale value. They look at what they spent on their home and the cost of the improvements they'd like to make and compare it to what they can expect to get in a resale. In many cases, they walk away from a project because the return isn't immediate. Instead, home improvement projects should be viewed as an investment. If you have a property you like, that's in a great neighborhood, and don't have a need to move, why not enhance your standard of living by making home improvements? Your return of investment will be immediate as you and your family get to enjoy your "new"



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home for years to come. It's a quality of life issue.

Amy: And that's exactly how we looked at it. For us, we knew that this was going to be our forever home. A place where memories are being made.

R&A

Dear Don:

We are so thankful that we had the opportunity to work with you on our recent home renovation and addition, and we would like the opportunity to express our appreciation for the excellent service you provided.

We were first introduced to your company through our architect and we were impressed with everyone from the start. From the initial walk through to the final inspection, we were constantly met with professionalism and partnership. The entire team was very conscientious of their work and craftsmanship while delivering excellent quality work. The attention to detail and superior carpentry stayed true to the feel and character of the original home built in the 1930's.

The job foreman communicated with us regularly, always made sure we knew the status of the project and went out of his way to make sure the job stayed on track to meet its deadline. No problem was too big to be handled and no question too small to be answered. With regular job meetings and a quick responsiveness, our questions and concerns always had a reply in a timely manner. The entire team worked hard to ensure that we were in our new home for Christmas, and we could not have asked for anything more for the Holidays!

We love our new home. We are so grateful for your hard work. We appreciate everything you have done for us and we would not hesitate to work with you again.

Amy & Oliver



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another distressed
do-it-yourselfer.

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#2. It takes way longer than they say.

#3. You seldom have the right tools (let alone the skills to use them).

#4. It's messier than they make it look...a lot messier!

#5. What seemed like a fun project quickly isn't.

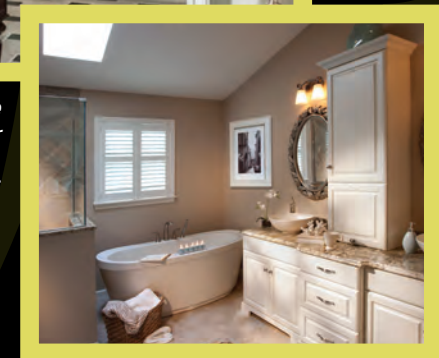
#6. If it actually gets finished, chances are so is your marriage.

#7. And even though you have the satisfaction to say that YOU DID IT!...most are too embarrassed with the end product to admit it.

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