

HOME OF THE WEEK

When two become one



49 Sumach St., Toronto.

ALL PHOTOS BY MARCO SOBREVINAS

Corktown house matches the vibrant personality of late homeowner, who was known to friends as Sassy

MADELEINE WHITE >

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THE LISTING 49 Sumach St.

ASKING PRICE \$1,875,000

TAXES \$6,865.97 (2016)

LOT SIZE 30.3 by 127.92 feet

LISTING AGENT Ron Reaman, Salesman, Bosley Real Estate Ltd., Brokerage

By combining the two homes into one, the space has interior width uncommon for Victorians.

Her real name was Mary Waddell, but that's not what her friends called her.

"Everyone knew her as Sassy," said Matthew Chavel, her godson. "That was her name. It wasn't a first or last name. It was just Sassy."

Mr. Chavel described Sassy as a strong character; someone who liked to throw parties, laugh and spend hours in her house chatting with people. And like her personality, her house – 49 Sumach St. – is equally vibrant.

THE BACK STORY



The two sides of the building were combined in the late 1980s.

Sassy died at age 73 on June 27, 2016. She left her Corktown home to her godsons, Matthew and his brother, James. In a way, it was a little of bit of

history repeating itself.

The semi-detached on Sumach Street had originally belonged to Mr. Chavel's father, David, who was an artist and used the main floor as a studio. But in the early 1970s, he sold it to Sassy. By the late 1980s, the other side of the building (51 Sumach St.) came up for sale and she snapped it up.

"At that point, she did a big renovation on the whole house and combined the two of them," Matthew Chavel said.



Looking back towards the front entrance from one of the dining areas.

Suddenly, she had not one but three dining spaces (a dining room, a casual dining and a breakfast space in the kitchen). She also managed to fit three full bathrooms in the combo home, as well as three bedrooms and a 30-foot-wide living room off the back.

"What she managed to do by combining this is give a width, breadth, space and storage that is just unheard in an old Victorian like this," listing agent Ron Reaman said.

This wasn't the first time Mr. Chavel had witnessed two houses becoming one. His mother, Barrie, had done the same thing in their Cabbagetown home, 1 (and 3) Alpha Ave., about a decade before Sassy did, in the mid-1970s.



The lot's parallelogram shape causes some strange quirks, like kitchen cabinets that are not perfectly straight.

Sassy didn't just have a design plan in mind when she transformed her home, she had a social vision, too.

"My brother and I spent a lot time at 49 Sumach," Mr. Chavel said. "My godmother had huge parties – that house was amazing for entertaining."

"This house has all of these little pockets ... where people can mingle in big parties," he added.



An outdoor space is accessible from one of the bedrooms.

Mr. Reaman is particularly smitten with the dining room, which is off the front on the 49 Sumach side.

"I'm so excited by the idea that you could put a table and chairs in there to comfortably seat 14 people for dinner," he said, adding that if you really wanted to go big, you could probably fit an 18-person table in the space and still have enough breathing room.

That dining-room fireplace is one of three. There's also a gas one in the living room and another brick one in the master suite.



The home features three dining areas.

The house has other quirks, such as the fact that some of the kitchen cabinet doors aren't straight. They are ever so slightly on the bias. Or the front-hall closet is a triangular space in order to square with the dining room behind and the hallway in front.

These little features aren't mistakes. They were ways that Sassy compensated for the fact the house is on a parallelogram lot.

"The house sits on a slight angle on the property," Mr. Reaman said. "The effect is you have all of these odd angles inside. But it's so charming."

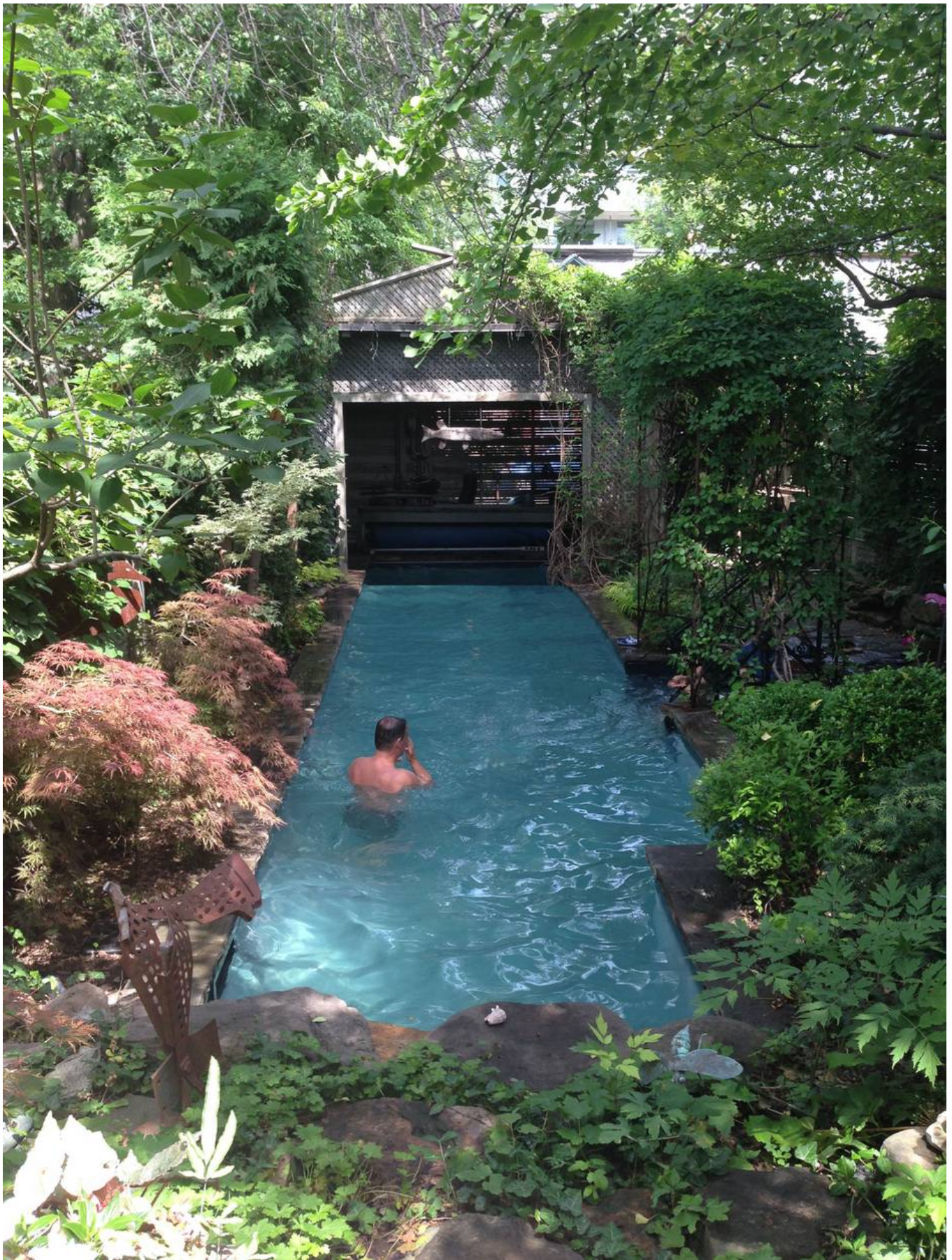


The combined home has three bedrooms.

Between the angles, the layout and the pool in the backyard (more on that below), 49-51 Sumach St. presented Mr. Reaman with an interesting question as a real estate agent.

"Pricing this was a serious challenge for me," he said. "The house is an anomaly."

While there was no price reference for this house, there was context. Mr. Reaman decided to list the property below \$2-million because Corktown, which is near King and Parliament Streets, doesn't have a lot of houses above that price point. Keeping it below that threshold was an attempt to widen the buyer pool, Mr. Reaman said.



The lap pool is one of the home's best features.

THE BEST FEATURE

Both Mr. Chavel and Mr. Reaman agree the showstopping feature of this double house is the lap pool in the backyard.

"It's the absolute clincher for this property," Mr. Reaman said.

Sassy originally wanted the pool so she could do laps for exercise, Mr. Chavel said. Despite its utilitarian purpose, she designed the pool and its accompanying "boathouse" with flare.

"She and my mom came up with this concept to have it feel like she was at the cottage," he said. "Like the pool would lead you into a space that would feel like a boathouse."

The "boathouse" is staged as an outdoor dining room; the space comes complete with skylights, a hidden cabinet for backyard tools and a separate room for the pool machinery.