

44 Somerset Road Lexington MA



We bought 44 Somerset the winter of 2007 from Josephine Mirabeli, age 91 and still going strong. Her son, age 82, said “*we need to move her while I can still do the weekly drive from Albany*”. The house was full of love, but in desperate need of attention. The original intent was to do almost nothing but deal with things in obvious need of repair. Like walls and ceilings and the fact that there was just one bathroom (and two teenaged daughters), and the “garage” could maybe fit something slightly larger than a fiat (now the workout room with French doors to the outside). The attic was reachable via a non-conforming stairway in what is now the closet outside the upstairs front bedroom. The slanted roofline made the space more than a bit cramped for my 6' 3" husband, so we started thinking. The basement was a very scary place - dark, dirty, an incinerator in one corner, and a toilet with a privacy shower curtain in the other. The stairs down to the basement went through what is now the pantry area near the kitchen. More thinking...and then we met Carl Oldenburg, an amazing architect here in Lexington that has the skill of blending the old with the new. Financially, it would have made more sense to demo the house and start over since we did end up replacing all the plumbing, electrical, most walls and ceilings and all the windows, but we chose to preserve the historic quality of the home, keeping it in harmony with the rest of the beautiful and classic homes on our tree lined street.

Some fun design facts

- The inspiration for **the stairs** came from a photo my husband saw in Dwell. He researched stainless steel railings and found a company in Italy to make them. It took them 3 tries to get them right, with a 4-6 month lag between orders/returns – they came by boat. We lived in the house for 6+ months with temporary 2x4 railings. The solid maple treads were handmade by the Amish in PA. Note: we have a box of stainless rods, made in Italy that can easily be installed in the gap between treads; we didn't feel like we needed them.
- I fell in love with **the vessel sink** in the first floor bath; I had to have it, even at \$1400. It's a one-of-a-kind, glass blown sink. The challenge was 'what to paint the walls'? It's shimmery and it needed walls that would complement but not dull and not compete. Jean Lucas, our painter, was my savior. He figured out how to apply the bronzed finished paint that was a challenge.
- The master bathroom probably gave me the most angst. I was going for a rain forest / Zen feel and I got attached to **the marble that is the bench in the shower**. The only problem was that Gerrity Stone in Woburn didn't have a price on it. In the week+ that it took for them to track it down, I forged ahead and picked out the white pebble wall tile and the bronze flat-metal floor tile. I then moved on to the tiger wood cabinets and black granite counter tops, mocking it all in PhotoShop to make sure it worked. It did, so I moved on to the next challenge. Then Gerrity called and said “*you couldn't have picked a more expensive slab if you tried*”. I think they were shocked when we went ahead with the \$4K price tag, but time was money and I couldn't handle starting over. When it came to painting the bathroom, my first try was a complete disaster. I had white trim and green walls, and it was horrific. Jean Lucas came to my rescue once again and came up with the black trim and more neutral colored walls.
- **The kitchen faucet** was featured in the latest Kohler catalog for \$700, the only problem it wasn't officially out yet. Its production was delayed, which set back a functioning kitchen.

- Construction on the addition started August 2007.
- The granite counters in the kitchen are doubled edged to convey a more contemporary and rich feel. To support the added weight, Patriot Custom Homes added additional support to the cabinets.
- The platinum tile in the kitchen is industrial strength porcelain
- The house is wired with 2 coax cables and 2 CAT5 internet data cables running to every room. The hub for the house is located in the small ½ tech-closet outside the master bedroom.
- We put in sound proofing in the floor between 3rd floor bedroom and the master bedroom to reduce the sound impact of footfalls and voices.
- To make things more fair for our 2 girls, we created a 2nd “suite” out of the two family bedrooms on the 2nd floor by adding a door to the back of the closet. The pass-thru is easily a closet again.

Things that have gone wrong

- Ice dams on the 3rd floor in the early years. One of the reasons that we chose Patriot Custom Homes in the first place is that they stand behind their work. We had two incidents of leaks resulting from highly unusual amounts rain followed by a deep freeze. In both cases Patriot responded immediately and found and fixed the problem. We have not had issues with the leaks since they were repaired.
- Ice dam in first floor sunroom. January 2018 - when we were out of town. Patriot repaired the roof flashing and coated with roof cement.
- The NuHeat thermostat that controls heat to master shower bench stopped working after the first 2 years. We consulted with Patriot for how to repair it and we decided to let it be. Odds are the electrical break is under the shower floor.

What I'm going to miss

- Starting my morning out on the comfy couch with my coffee in front of the gas fireplace...even in the summer.
- The views from the roof-deck. Which btw is above the mosquito fly zone, who knew.
- Walking to Cary Hall to catch venues such as *Three Dog Night, Peter Wolf, The Temptations, Lenny Clarke*
- Biking or rollerblading to work on the bike path
- Walking into town for dinner during a snowy blizzard
- Getting woken up Patriots Day by the sounds of muskets firing for the reenactment of the Battle Of Lexington
- All the light – this house is bathed in sunlight all day
- The cardinal that tries to convince his mate each spring to make her nest in the wisteria vines outside the sunroom windows. The wisteria is grown on cables and is not attaching to the house. Don't listen to inspectors that say to remove growing vines. It's pretty and functional; it blocks the glare from the sun and eliminates the need for shades.
- The Green Banana Party and other Merriam Hill Association sponsored events. \$15 to join annually and you get access to a list of neighborhood baby-sitters as well as 4-5 annual party/events.
- The Flick – you can't beat being able to walk less than a ½ mile to catch a movie & grabbing dinner first at one of the restaurants just across the street.
- The cask aged manhattan at Il Casale – we'll drive back just for them
- Dawn & Chris at Lexx Restaurant – sit at the bar and introduce yourselves
- Waze doesn't use Somerset as a cut through

Our Crew

Builder: Dylan and Anson James of Patriot Custom Homes / <http://patriotgreenbuilders.com/>, **Architect:** Carl Oldenburg / <http://www.oldenarch.com/wordpress/>, **Painter/Plasterer:** Jean Lucas / lucas.prolinepainting@yahoo.com, **Wood Floors:** Kevin Lehouillier of Colonial Floors / <http://www.colonialfloorservice.com/>, **Tile Floors:** Tony (978) 459-4062, **Electrician:** Tom / (978.902.5731), **Plumber:** Scott Robillard / scott@sr-plumbing.com, **Lawn Care:** Jose / 978.413.9339, **Plowing:** Keegan Landscaping / [781.861.7094](tel:781.861.7094)