

History of Improvements, 104 Bowen Street, John Helme Clarke House

1848 Home constructed on present site of Pembroke Dorms – now called Brown’s Andrews Hall

Circa **1864** West Bay to house added

1946 Historic core of house moved up Bowen Street to present location to make way for the construction of Andrews Hall at Pembroke College; the Seven Sisters woman’s college which merged in 1970 with Brown University to form the coed institution we know today. The new foundation was poured at 104 Bowen for the home, and house drops installed for sewer and water. Electric utilities were and are delivered through underground conduit. The electric service was delivered at a then whopping 400 amps to accommodate the electrically-heated driveway. One can appreciate the low cost of power in the 1950’s by noting the instructions on the now disconnected component servicing the snow-melting driveway: “on in Winter, off in Spring”.

The large service copper breakers remain (and exceed today’s standards in quality, construction, safety and utility). The meter was replaced in 2015, as previously National Grid and prior thereto Narragansett Electric did not have consumer meters of that size with telemetry for automatic reading. Thus, the meters (water and power) are now read without the need to admit servicemen from the utilities.

1960’s A 2-bay, one story garage was added, with an enclosed breezeway connecting the house to the garage.

1990 The house was purchased by the Goddard family who undertook substantial renovations. The third floor was augmented by dormers in the West and South bedrooms. A new bathroom was added, and central air conditioning was installed throughout the house and in the garage studio/office.

An impressive artist studio complete with North-facing skylights was constructed over the garage. A 2nd floor was also added over the breezeway consisting of an upstairs office serviced by several cedar closets, a small lavette and thermal pane windows overlooking the yard. A convenient laundry room was added between the older house and the office. Behind the parking bays of the garage is a heated and air-conditioned utility, work, office and/or storage room with access to the studio above by a quaint spiral staircase and egress to the yard through a separate door.

2004 The present owners purchased the property. Substantial landscaping work was completed to sculpt the yard and remove several terminally-diseased trees. Stone walls were repaired, and all of the brick on pathways removed to correct some crowning due to an improperly applied base and non-firmly-seated brick boarders. New sand and stone dust beds were emplaced and leveled, and the bricks reseated, and the seams filled with the proper stone dust.

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Most kitchen appliances were upgraded and replaced. The small oven was removed and the cabinetry on the West-facing wall reworked to accommodate a large double oven system. Disposals were replaced and a trash compactor added.

The studio was wired with premium cabling and acoustics to support the addition of a very substantial surround sound system serviced by premium Sony components. This system is fed by a large capacity amplifier/tuner to support streamed music, DVD movies and HDTV provided by the FIOS optical CATV and internet service delivered right to the house drop.

The uneven and raw brick floor of the mudroom was tiled over. All the rooms were painted and or papered.

2004-2005 All of the lighting fixtures, sconces and chandeliers were replaced.

2013 The exterior of the original house was stripped down to bare wood using a bladed tool certified for lead paint removal by CertaPro, a clear coat primer was laid down and the finish coat applied. A lawn sprinkler system was added and an abatement meter installed to capture and document the water applied to irrigation (as opposed to sent down the sewer, as the sewer charges in Providence key directly to water usage, and all water used is assumed to go down the sewers unless otherwise accounted for by such a meter).

2014-2015 The driveway was repaved in **2014** and in **2015** any micro cracks repaired, and the macadam sealed. Masonry repairs to the ½ city block of granite walls and stairs was effectuated by Antonio Fonseca. Cracks were filled and the entirety of the walls and steps were treated with stone cleaner and exposed to high powered pressure washing to restore the slightly coral hue.

Arborists were engaged to trim and prune the two large evergreen trees framing either side of the house frontage. New ground cover was installed on the front beds and the beds abutting the street. The fencing surrounding the property was repaired and painted. The decorative lattice rails on the roof of the third floor were repaired and painted. LED string lights were installed on the third-floor roof as an option for evening highlighting.

In late **2014** all angled roofing surfaces were stripped to the framing, any damaged underlying wood replaced and new seal coating emplaced and covered with GAG Timberline Lifetime shingles. In **January of 2016** during the warm spell, the South dormer flat roof was completely removed and replaced. All the exterior walls of the newer parts of the house were repainted.

In **2014**, a new ceramic tile floor was laid in the kitchen and a new floor placed in the den. The fireplace and hearth in the den was improved by Italian marble. A Miele gas cooktop was added as was a new microwave. Wood floors were sanded and refinished. In **2015**, a new 75-gallon gas hot water heater replaced the previous storage unit fed by its own boiler. This led to more efficient and rapid hot water in a smaller footprint in the utility room.

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In **2015** the walls and ceiling were resurfaced and painted in the main entryway, foyer and staircase. New chandeliers and lighting were hung. New stair covering carpet and runner were installed. New Nest internet-connected, smart thermostats were installed to control the heating systems on the first and third floors.

Recent Improvements

Fences

Border fences with neighbors' street-facing and driveway have been spot replaced and repaired where and when wood rot has been discovered. This Walpole fence has been about 60% replaced but will require on-going maintenance, as with all ground-contacting wood structures and fencing.

Lighting fixtures

All projecting incandescent can lights replaced with 'warm' 2,500-3,500 lumen LED lights affording much greater efficiency and better aesthetics. As well, all switch controls feeding such lights replaced with dimmable sliding rheostatic controls.

Gas fireplace

A gas fireplace was installed to replace the wood pellet stove in the family room. The pellet stove required wood pellets and routine ash removal and pane cleaning. The cost of natural gas has come down to well below the unit costs of wood pellets and is much more efficient and eco-friendly. This fireplace draws its own air supply and expels the exhaust gases through a stainless-steel pipe with a roof cap. In this way the heating effect is additive, and no draft induction occurs. The gas hearth surround was custom-fashioned and reinstalled to minimize the overlay otherwise masking the custom Italian marble facing.

New hardwood floor

A new floor was installed in the family room: hand-fashioned from red oak with ebony inlays and laid to mirror the vintage floors with a similar inlay pattern.

Kitchen counters, backsplash, floors

Kitchen and entry-way floors were replaced with new white highly finished tile laid on top of screwed-down subfloors. This prefinished but expensive subflooring treatment ensures a solid, non-flexing surface to maintain adhesion to the floor base and eliminate grout spalling. The new color scheme evokes a more light and airy kitchen. Corian counters were replaced with new highly polished stone. Additional length was added to the stone counters to accommodate an overhang hosting two seats of saddleback bar stools on East end.

Kitchen sinks and faucets

New sinks were installed with large uninterrupted single wells for large pot and pan handling, faucets also replaced at that time. A new disposal was placed in the North sink

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WCs and Baths

Toilets have been replaced throughout with new single-piece porcelain American Standard units incorporating improved, water-efficient flushing mechanisms. The stainless framed shower stalls were all replaced with frameless glass stalls and new water fixtures.

Wall lighting

Period wall lighting and sconces have been removed and place-holder lighting fixtures hung to ready the house for its next owners. Walls, wainscoting and woodwork have been restored and neutral shades of new premium paint applied to the refinished walls. This tabula rasa awaits its next owner's personalization or will tastefully persist as a light and airy color scheme.

Security Systems

All entry zones and windows are alarmed and the house is equipped with hard-wired fire detection and glass break sonic detection monitors which report into the security service. We pay \$32 a month for this monitoring. The alarmed security nexus is attached to a cell phone transmitter so that cutting wires will not interrupt the security service. In the 15 years we've resided here, we have not had a theft or any other security event. Additionally, 360 degree HD external cameras monitor in real time and record motion in and around the house - this can be convenient to interrogate the monitors when someone's at the door or to check for packages and deliveries. One can access the camera system remotely by cell phone.

Communications

104 Bowen has two house drops of fiber optic FIOS cable right to the utility room in the basement. This affords ultra fast internet speeds of 100 MPS down and up (even faster for a slight monthly premium) as well as the usual streaming cable fare and a landline used for conference calls. The drops and boxes serve the main house as well as the basement apartment. These speeds, now simply part of one's FIOS CATV package, are in excess of what T3s delivered 15 years ago, but back then at a price of \$7,500 a month. The house can (and has) easily incorporate a fully functioning office. As well, the basement rental apartment could continue to function as such, be an in law apartment or an office. Separate and private ingress and egress make this legal 2nd habitable unit unobtrusive.

Arborism

We recently had the city remove a dead tree immediately in front of the house and just last week they finished the project by grinding away the resultant stump. We have had the trees framing the front of the house pruned and in July the neighbors are scheduled to pare back all of their encroaching branches across the back alley. We have also treated and pruned the weeping cherries which frame the back patio.