
Boston

HOME & PROPERTY

A Colorful Past

Coincidences abound when a designer begins renovating her stately Brookline manse.

by **RACHEL SLADE** • 9/10/2013, 6:51 a.m.

Sign up for our weekly home and property newsletter, featuring homes for sale, neighborhood happenings, and more.

CW.BOSTONMAGAZINE@SHIEBER.COM

SUBSCRIBE



What was once the kitchen is now the living room, which features a midcentury painting by Fred Garbers, Barcelona chairs found on eBay, and lamps from Anthropologie. (Photographs by Trent Bell)

Kate Patterson first admired the grand turn-of-the-century Brookline estate more than a decade ago. At the time, she was living nearby and frequently walked her dog over to gaze at the home's large backyard and the adjacent park, with its ancient weeping willow trees and tiny wildlife sanctuary. The neighboring abodes were equally beautiful Dutch Revivals, Arts and Crafts bungalows, and Spanish Revivals, all dating from the same period. Needless to say, the house wasn't for sale—nor was Kate looking.

Boston

market. “We’ve bought and sold plenty of homes over the years, and by talking to people, I’m often one step ahead of the real estate brokers,” she says. The Pattersons patiently waited for the price to drop and scooped it up in November 2010.

“It was a mess,” says Kate of the six-bedroom abode when she first walked through. “People thought we were crazy for buying it.” The previous owners had lived there for 50 years and had made a few questionable modifications, including the construction of a sunroom off the back that was literally rotting. General neglect had left the home dark and gloomy. There was a shower in the parlor and a chair lift attached to the magnificent central staircase. At the landing of said staircase, a pair of grand windows opened to yet another shoddy addition, which rendered the entire foyer dark and lifeless. But, as Kate says, “The house had great detail and flow. Plus, we’re a tall family and appreciated its 10-foot-high ceilings.”

Boston



Owner Kate Patterson painted the entry foyer white, refinished the floors, and added modern touches, including Flor carpet tiles and a console table from Hudson, in the South End.

Kate enlisted the Chestnut Hill-based architecture firm Warner + Cunningham to navigate Brookline's historical commission and help her reimagine the space. Their first major move was to swap the living room and kitchen so that the latter would be

Boston

Meanwhile, Kate began researching the history of her fixer-upper and quickly discovered a string of coincidences. For starters, she'd just relocated her family from Cleveland, while the home's original owners, the Howards, had left the Brookline house in 1920 because they were relocating to Cleveland. The weirdness continued when Kate, who was raised in Florida, read in Henry Howard's autobiography that while sailing from New York to Cuba on his yacht, Alice, he'd spent some time on an obscure, uninhabited island in the Bahamas. Kate knew that island well and had even been there—it was owned by a former family member whose grandfather had been a rum runner.

Her connection to the house emboldened Kate to decorate with confidence. She painted its walls shades of blue and gray, and illuminated the rooms with modern fixtures bought online through Ylighting, Lightology, and Lucid Lighting. Many of the furnishings are reupholstered thrift-shop finds or family hand-me-downs.



With a coat of Benjamin Moore "Sea Life," custom drapes, and a traditional rug from Gregorian, the dining room was entertaining-ready.

Kate's sophisticated taste didn't come out of nowhere—her mother had been a designer and had raised her four children in France for several years. Kate remembers wandering through Parisian flea markets with her brother at the age of six. That's why thinking like a designer comes naturally to her: "Most people worry about food when they're about to throw a party," she says. "I painted the living room blue."

Thanks to her keen eye, the home now has a cheerful, welcoming feel, which complements family life. "At any given time, there are 10 teenagers here splashing in the pool or raiding the fridge," she says. And then there are the two Olde English Bulldogs, Lola and Oscar, who love taking a dip in the new pool or sleeping on the kitchen floor while Kate works as an interior designer and, when required, as a community activist.

Right now she's trying to protect that beautiful park across the street from development. Which leads to one more coincidence: Back in the 1960s there were plans to build a major road right through this neighborhood. Local groups protested and successfully blocked its construction. When Kate began rallying to preserve this open land once again, she learned that one of the people who'd led the charge against the highway had lived in this very house. "They fought so hard to protect this area and earn conservation status for the park," Kate says. "I feel like I'm carrying on their legacy."

Boston



The house as it looks today and as it did circa 1920, when the Howard family (its original owners) departed Brookline for Cleveland.

Boston



One of Kate's dogs stands in the custom kitchen, designed by CW Design and built by Kramer's Custom Kitchens & Woodworking. The stovetop backsplash is finished in deeply faceted Ann Sacks tiles.

Boston



Boston

adorned serving tray.



Boston



Boston

In the master bathroom, a custom sink base, fabricated in Rhode Island, holds a marble top.



A Miami native, Kate considers having a backyard pool fairly normal. The furnishings are by RH.

Architect Warner + Cunningham, Chestnut Hill

Contractor The Remodeling Company, Beverly

Kitchen Designer CW Design, Brookline

GET THAT LOOK

Where to find décor inspired by this story.

Boston



“Parallel Reality,” \$14 per tile, Flor.

Boston



Ludwig Mies van der Rohe "Barcelona" chair, from \$5,068, Design Within Reach.



Boston



Regina Andrew red-coral-branch lamp, \$327, shopcandelabra.com.

Boston



“Bertoia” barstool with seat pad, \$1,096, Design Within Reach.

Boston



“Faline” library table, \$3,375, Hudson.

The Boston Home team has curated a list of the best home design and home remodeling professionals in Boston, including [architects](#), [builders](#), [kitchen and bath experts](#), [lighting designers](#), and more. Get the help you need with [FindIt/Boston's guide to home renovation pros](#).

Read More About:

On the Market

You Might Also Like



Found Art: Branching Out



Seven Skilled Woodworkers to Hire for Your Next Reno



Editors' Picks: Into the Clay

TRENDING

1 On the Market: A Quirky Condo in Bar Harbor
