



Custom Contracting, Inc.

“your neighborhood remodeler”

Your Neighborhood Remodeler

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Evolution of the Bathroom

For our great-great-great grandparents, nature’s call meant braving the elements for a trip to the outhouse. Today’s bathrooms have radiant heat floors, smart technology and tile chic enough to serve as the background for your teenager’s Instagram selfies.

So how did we get here?

The progression of the bathroom tracks with advances in science and technology — from the discovery of bacteria getting people *much* more interested in cleanliness, to indoor plumbing making the bathroom concept more practical, to environmental concerns driving features that conserve energy.

Colonial Times: Let’s Take It Outside

Our ancestors used chamber pots to whisk away their waste, or they put distance between toiletting and living space with outhouses or designated holes in the ground.

Sometimes they included a little design, such as carving in crescent-moon-and-star cutouts to indicate ladies’ and men’s rooms and let in light and air.

Bathing for more fortunate families involved fancy basins perched on elaborate stands in the bedroom, in spaces meant for dressing, applying makeup and arranging your powdered wig.

The Victorian Era Through Mid-Century Modernization

America introduced its first bathtub in 1842. The mid-1800s brought the widespread use of flush toilets. The latter half of the 19th century, meanwhile, ushered in sewer systems and the chance to bring the outhouse indoors.

That time was right for bathroom start-ups! John Michael Kohler launched his manufacturing business in 1873, and The Standard Sanitary Manufacturing Company (today’s American Standard) formed in Pennsylvania just two years later. Standard developed the one-piece toilet, built-in tubs and combination faucets and ditched copper, zinc and cast iron for corrosion-resistant chrome and brass fittings.

At the dawn of the 20th century, folks caught onto the science of bacteria — and got serious about sanitary practices. Indoor plumbing was popularized, and by 1920 most new construction had at least one full bathroom.

In the post-WWII era, when the world seemed flush with excitement and opportunity, families added more bathrooms. Parents built en suite baths off the master and moved children into bathrooms of their own.

Today’s Generation: Bathrooms Beyond Function

Families today prioritize bathrooms with extra square footage to allow for double vanities, dressing areas, steam showers, soaking tubs and other amenities. The tech revolution has introduced smart products like voice- and touchscreen-operated appliances, heated toilet seats with adjustable ambient lighting and Amazon Alexa-connected mirrors.

These features sound incredibly indulgent compared to bathrooms of the past, but today’s bathrooms are also contributing to energy ef-



The shower at the home featured in our Client Spotlight includes a modern linear drain and curbless entry.

iciency. Smart technology, radiant-heat floors and towel racks, low-flow toilets and power shower heads are reducing energy, heat and water waste.

Environmental advantages aside, investing in our bathrooms can have a big payoff. The bathroom is the place where you ease into your morning and wind down each day; where you find respite with lavender candles and Egyptian cotton towels; where you create welcoming spaces for your children, party guests and visiting in-laws.

Bathrooms do a lot for us. Your great-great-great grandparents would want you to appreciate them.

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Management Memo: Be Proactive About Doing Your Homework



President Bill Farnsworth, general manager Scott Blain.

Thinking about doing a major home renovation, like a big addition? Picking the right remodeling firm for the project is a critical part of the process. But before you even go down that path, you need to do a little research. Or in some cases, a lot of research.

The fact is, larger projects often can't proceed until you have certain information. Digging up that information can be time-consuming and will likely require a visit or two to your local planning and/or building departments.

Here are five considerations that you should explore well before you sign the contract with a remodeling firm:

- 1. Surveys:** A survey (a.k.a. a plot plan) shows the exact measurements of your property lines and all structures within. Most municipalities require the completion of a survey before they'll issue a permit for an addition or a porch or deck project. And construction can't begin until you have that permit in hand. Keep in mind that the process can take a couple months, so be sure to contact a surveyor sooner rather than later.
- 2. Zoning:** Every community has its own unique and everchanging zoning bylaws and loopholes. These regulations cover everything from what you're allowed to build inside the house to setback issues (e.g. minimum distance the structure must be from a street, the property line,

wetlands, etc.). If wetlands/conservation issues are involved, you'll probably need to hire an engineer to look into the matter.

3. Historic designation: Do you live in an officially designated historic home or historic district? If so, you may face certain limitations in terms of what changes are allowable. You may also need to go through extra steps to receive approval for your project. For example, the following clause applies to Arlington homes designated as historical: "If you are proposing exterior changes to your house that affect more than 25 percent of a front or side elevation, then the town by-law requires that the Historical Commission review your plans in a public hearing."

4. Electrical: Is your house wired for 200-amp service, or are you closer to the old standard of 60 amps? If you're doing a major renovation, you'll probably need 200 amps to handle the increased electrical demand — and getting up to that level can be a significant expense. Another important question: Do you have hardwired smoke detectors? If not, you'll need to have them installed as part of your renovation.

5. Hazardous materials: If you have asbestos or lead paint in your home, you should have it abated well before a remodeling project begins. If these or other hazardous materials are encountered mid-project, there's a risk your municipality will shut down the project for several weeks.

The bottom line: By researching issues like these proactively, you can get your remodeling firm up to speed more quickly. As a result, they'll be able to begin construction sooner and proceed with their work with the confidence that fewer unexpected issues will arise.

If you have questions about how to research any of these points, feel free to contact Custom for guidance.

Evolution of the Bathroom,

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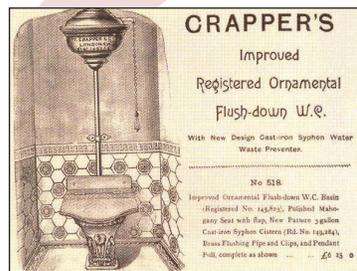
Timeline

1842–1851:

The first American bathtub is installed, and the flush toilet finally gains popularity 300 years after its invention.

1873–1875:

Kohler and Standard Sanitary take the bathroom fixture world by storm.



1905–1920:

Home magazines cover the realities of household bacteria; sewer systems and indoor plumbing bring the outhouse indoors.

English plumber Thomas Crapper helped popularize the flush toilet in the late 1800s and improved its functionality.



This American Standard ad from 1905 emphasizes that their bathrooms are the "cleanest" and "healthiest."

1940s–1950s:

En suite bathrooms emerge for parents, with separate bathrooms for kiddos. Sculptor Peter Ganine produces it as a tub toy, with over 50 million sold.



2010s:

Tech brings in heated floors and toilet seats, smart mirrors and voice-activated showers.



Today's bathrooms often forgo the classic bathtub in favor of the spacious shower.

Client Spotlight: The McElroy-LeRoy Home

Aging in place — the ability to stay in your home as you get older — is very much on the minds of homeowners these days. And more and more, it's something that we've been accounting for in our projects at Custom.

Arlington's Richard McElroy and Ann LeRoy offer a case in point. They've lived in their house, built in 1900, for 25 years. After spraining her ankle a couple years ago, Ann experienced how tough it was to get up and down the stairs to use the house's only bathroom, located on the second floor.

"We're both retired, and we talked about where we'd want to live down the line," Ann says. "We love our house and its location near Mass Ave. and the bike path. But we realized that in order to stay here long-term, we'd need to do some things to make it more livable."

After an architect and structural engineer worked out the plans, Richard and Ann chose Custom to bring the project to fruition.

More First-Floor Living Space

The primary goal for Richard and Ann was to improve their living space on the first floor. The plans called for a 23' x 24' one-level addition consisting of a family room, bathroom, laundry room, entry hall and mudroom along with an open-side entry porch attached to the back of the home.



The new addition has significantly increased the living space for Richard and Ann.

The new addition was to be supported by a continuous-poured concrete, full-height foundation that included a one-sided retaining wall foundation to support the main house's existing fieldstone foundation. Custom general manager Scott Blain said this would be the most cost-effective option and preserve bulkhead access to the basement, but it did create some interesting logistical challenges.

"When the hole for the new foundation against the back wall was dug out, Custom had to work with the framers and then the cement company to ensure the wall didn't collapse once they removed the soil from the lower part of the fieldstone," Richard explains. "They were very careful, and everything went smoothly. It's turned out to be the perfect solution."



Here's a view of the entryway, which includes the front door, and the new family room.



The new first-floor bathroom is decorated in hues of blue with striking shower tile.

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Client Spotlight: The McElroy-LeRoy Home

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Planning for the Future

The new addition boasts a number of aging-in-place features, like a first-floor bathroom (with curb-less shower) and laundry room along with Americans with Disabilities Act-recommended requirements for doorway widths and threshold heights. As a result, it will be easy for Richard and Ann to transition to all-first-floor living when the time comes.

“It’s nice having the bathroom and laundry room on the first floor,” Ann says. “Our bedroom is currently on the second floor, but now that we have the new family room, we could easily close off our old living room and make it our bedroom.”



The new family room has plenty of natural light.



The home now features an open concept with new wide openings into the kitchen and dining room for better flow.



The laundry room, part of the new addition, includes a stainless steel sink and plenty of space for storage and countertop folding.

The couple has been spending a lot of time in the new family room, which they use as a reading room. The space has a cathedral ceiling and lots of natural light, and the gorgeous gas fireplace keeps the space warm and cozy all winter long.

‘Very Helpful and Responsive’

Richard and Ann appreciated Custom’s team approach to completing the project, praising project coordinator Michael Daniell and design assistant Hannah Wirtz for their help in choosing and ordering fixtures and fittings. They also enjoyed working with lead carpenter Bryan Lamoureux.

“Bryan was in touch with us almost every day about their progress,” Richard says. “He was quite meticulous about managing the trade subcontractors and making sure things were done right. Plus, he did a great job with all the finish carpentry.”

Having enjoyed the final product for awhile now, Richard and Ann give Custom a definite thumbs-up.

“They were very helpful and responsive throughout the process and provided a lot of guidance along the way,” Ann says. “We’re very happy with the way it all worked out.”

10 Small Luxuries Worth Every Penny

Want to make a big impact in your home without putting a big dent in your wallet?

Here are 10 items that fit the bill.

Touchless faucets use motion sensors to turn water on and off. They're convenient (great when you're holding something with two hands), hygienic (no more spreading germs from your hands to the handle) and stylish (if you like a sleek, modern look). Perfect for the kitchen or bathroom.

Soft-close drawer slides ensure drawers are never left ajar and — better yet — always close gently and silently.

Undercabinet microwave drawers let you conserve valuable counter space. Plus, they're easier and safer for kids to access than reaching up over a stovetop.



With **rainfall shower heads**, you can create a spa-like experience in your own bathroom. (Bonus: High-efficiency models can help you conserve water.) Also worth considering: detachable shower heads with adjustable settings.

Coffee centers are the perfect place to show off your coffee beans or grinds, coffee maker, mugs and everything else that makes for the perfect coffee experience.

Beverage centers open up more space for everything else in your fridge and can take the place of an existing small cabinet or a



dated trash compactor. They also make it easy for kids to reach in and get their own juices, waters or sodas.

A **pop-out step stool** in the bathroom lets kids wash their hands and brush their teeth without being on their tiptoes the whole time (or worse yet, trying to climb on the sink).

Eye-catching hardware like drawer handles and pulls make for an easy-to-install, affordable, high-impact alternative to a complete cabinet refresh.

Pot fillers are a godsend for anyone who loves cooking. No more treacherous walks across the kitchen with a giant pot filled with water. Now you can fill up the pot while it's sitting safely on the stovetop.



Extra electrical outlets make life easier, especially in a room where everyone charges their smartphones. But give careful thought to placement — make sure they'll get used and won't be in the way of anything. Pop-up outlets on the kitchen island are a nice touch.

Looking for Inspiration?

Please check out our website to learn about the design/build process, meet the members of our team and, most importantly, be inspired by projects we've worked on.

Visit www.custom-contracting.com today!



Custom Contracting, Inc.

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Check out custom-contracting.com to see our blog, a portfolio of our projects, an archive of past newsletters and client spotlights, plus more. You can also find us online at:



Client Referral Program

Refer a friend, get a reward:

That's how our **Client Referral Program** works.

You qualify for this program when:

- someone calls in and says you referred them,
- a referral signs on with us for their project, or
- you serve as a reference to a prospective client.

There are other ways to qualify.

For more details, please call us at **781-648-2835**.



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- Welcome and Thank You to Our New Clients in 2019

First class mail



Welcome and Thank You to Our New Clients in 2019

Elizabeth Delaney & Erin Lackaye	Arlington
Maria Abodeely & Matthew Trammell	Belmont
Debbie Bassett & Don Weikert	Lexington
Anthony Bohner & Farah Shafi	Arlington
Martin Borbone & Randy Walther	Arlington
Ruth Brescia	Arlington
Lynne & Stephen Brogan	Arlington
Tanya Bulkovshiteyn & Bob Thurston	Arlington
Rob & Ryan Chapman	Arlington
Lucia Chen-Lowe & Sam Lowe	Lexington
Michael Datta & Ava Li	Arlington
Nick Defriez & Sudie Marcuse	Arlington
Mike Gerstenblat & Sara Mayer	Winchester
Matt & Victoria Ginden	Arlington
Max & Frida Golts	Winchester
Daniel Gomez & Maria Estrada	Lexington
Laurie Govoni	Arlington
Michael Graf	Belmont
Karl & Karen Haglund	Belmont
Eileen Hannigan & Kevin Ward	Arlington
Brenda & Bret Harsham	Newton
Rachel & Chris Heep	Watertown
Lee & Lisa Herman	Natick
Jim & Jennifer Hinde	Arlington
Cathy Joyce	Arlington

Tobi Klein	Arlington
Steve Kleinedler	Winchester
Brian & Kristyn MacMillin	Arlington
Janna & Jason Moreau	Arlington
Meghan & Simona Munseeney	Arlington
Aniesa Parakkat & Scott Davis	Winchester
Heather Phipps	Arlington
Mike & Nancy Quinn	Medford
Dan & Kim Roselando	Medford
Amy & David Sach	Arlington
Steve Schrodell & Phoebe Yager	Lexington
Sarah & Andrew Stockwell	Arlington
Theodore Sussman & Lisa Freed	Lexington
Marcie Troisi	Winchester
Bernadette & Tim Tuttle	Arlington
Deborah Woods	Belmont

41 Total New Clients 2019

**Plus, we completed
58 other projects
for REPEAT
clients in 2019!**

