

Close Your Closets

By Sheila Selby

Are your clothes bursting out of your closets so much that you can't close your closet doors? If so, it's time for a closet redesign! Much of Brookline's housing stock has wonderful architectural details – beautiful moldings, arches, fireplaces, grand foyers – the list goes on. But one complaint I hear frequently is the lack of closet space. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, when many of Brookline's homes were built, people didn't have as many clothes or accessories as we do today, so there was no need for large built-in closets.

By redesigning your closet, you can increase its storage capacity, allowing you to close your closet door. Your redesign doesn't have to cost a lot of money if you design the space and install the storage components yourself.

Designing Your Closet

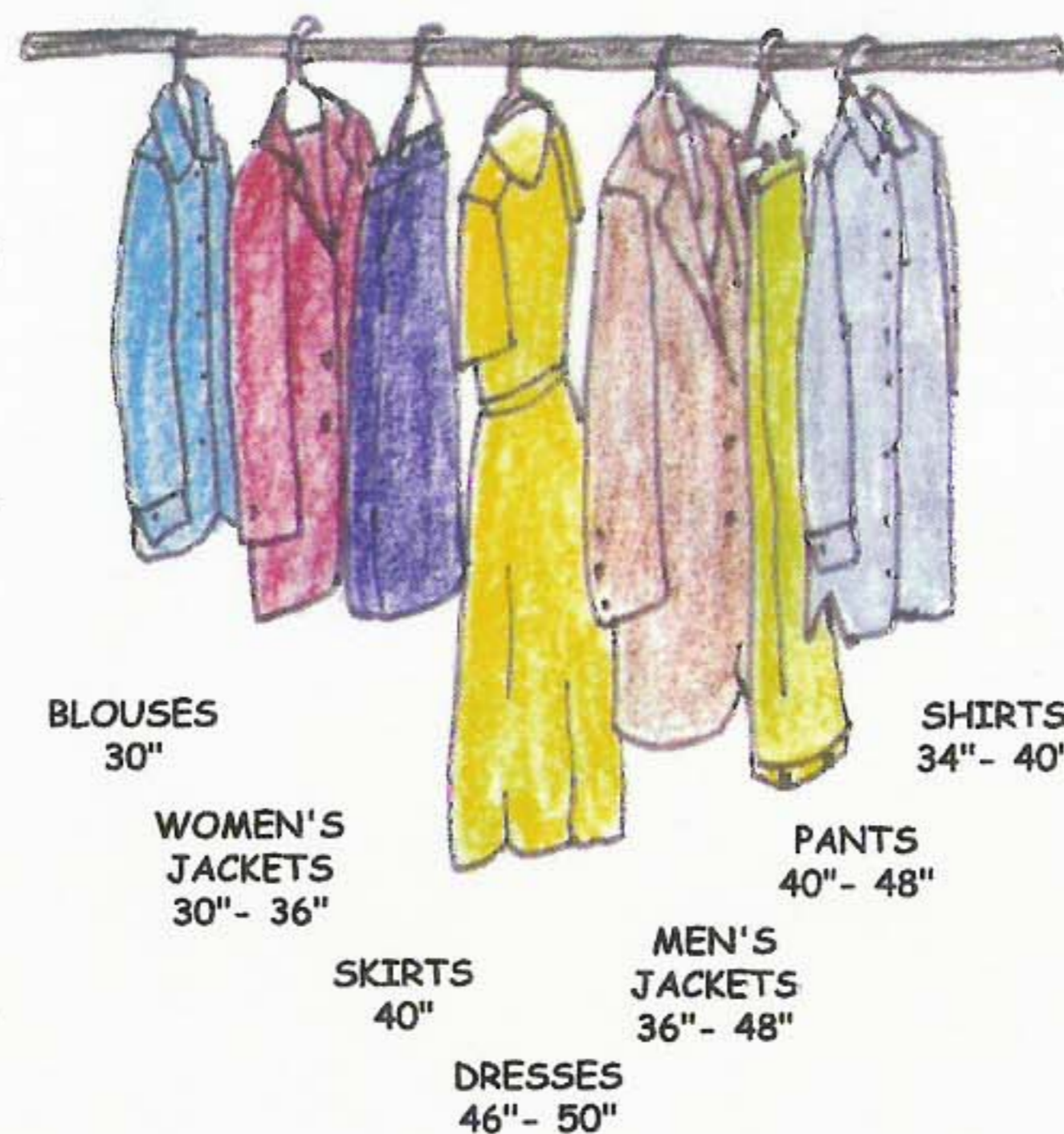
So how do you adapt the closet space of yesterday to fit today's clothes and accessories? The typical "reach-in" closet is 24" deep, has a single rod that is about 66" above the ground, and one or two shelves above the rod. If there is a second shelf, it probably can't be easily reached. Not very efficient!

To start your redesign, sort your hanging clothes according to length. In closet design jargon, hanging clothes are divided into three categories: short hang – shirts, blouses, short jackets, some skirts, and pants if folded in half; medium hang – jackets and skirts; and long hang – pants, dresses, and coats. As a guide, I've given you some typical hanging lengths for various articles of clothing in the accompanying drawing.

Once the items are sorted, measure how many inches of rod space each takes. By simply adding a lower rod for half of your short hang (referred to as "double hanging"), you could possibly increase your hanging area by as much as 50%!

If you have enough hanging space, but need more shelving for sweaters, handbags, shoes, or whatever, still consider adding a second rod for your short hang. That will free up more space to add shelving.

If your closets have high ceilings, use the height to its full advantage. Add a higher shelf, but make sure it's not as deep as the shelf below it. That way, items on the higher shelf will be easier to see and reach. On



TYPICAL HANGING LENGTHS

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these higher shelves, store seasonal items or other things that you don't use regularly.

Closet Systems

One inexpensive option for a closet redesign is a plastic-coated wire system that is wall-hung. These components typically have a length of solid wire attached below a wire shelf. The good news is these components are easy to install. The bad news is they don't provide flexibility, hangers don't move easily along the plastic coating, clothing can get snagged on the wire, and the components can't support much weight. I've heard of several instances where the whole system came crashing down because of the weight of the clothes. If you do use one of these systems, make sure you attach the pieces to studs.

There are other install-it-yourself systems that offer more flexibility and a variety of finishes. They are more expensive than the plastic-coated wire pieces, but they won't break the bank. The pluses are that these systems offer adjustable rods, solid shelving, and wire bins on glides. And some retailers selling these systems have sales associates who can help you plan your design. Again, most of the components are wall-hung, so take care to attach them to the studs.

Tips

Here are a few tips to enhance your new closet:

- If you need more non-hanging space, easy solutions are canvas organizers that attach over a rod with Velcro, or over-the-door racks.
- Lights in closets are great. Fluorescent lighting is safest,

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because it doesn't get as hot as incandescent. Incandescent lighting can pose a fire hazard and is not allowed by some building codes.

- If you have a closet with extra space, consider moving a piece of furniture, such as a small bureau, into the closet. Just make sure you have room to open and close all drawers.
- Rods and shelves are the basics in closet design, but there are a number of interesting and flexible storage options available: drawers and wire bins; hooks; tie and belt racks; telescoping rods; and shelf dividers, to name a few.
- Children's closets usually need to be more flexible than adult closets. Their clothes get larger and their accessories change as they grow. Using versatile components allows for these changes.

Closet Closed

If you implement these suggestions, your clothes closets should now close!

Sheila R. Selby, a 17-year Brookline resident, is a professional interior designer with extensive experience in both residential and commercial interior design projects. Sheila's firm, On The Move Interiors, provides interior design services for commercial and residential clients. Services include furniture and finishes selection, room arranging, color consulting, staging for real estate sales, styling, and providing furniture planning for clients who are moving. Learn more about On The Move Interiors by visiting the website at www.otminteriors.com.

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On The Move Interiors

Room arranging, color consulting, staging for real estate sales, and styling

617-277-9442

www.otminteriors.com

Email: srselby@otminteriors.com

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