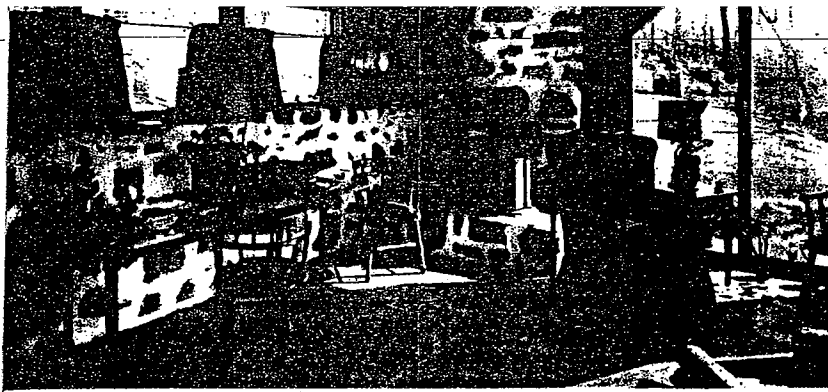




*Split-Level Construction, Built-Ins and
Climate Control Are Not the 20th Century
Innovations They Seem. Colonial Builders
Featured Them and a Prize Example Is*

MADISON'S 'HISTORIC HOUSE'

By SHIRLEY M. FRIEDMAN

IF YOU feel that "they just don't build houses today like they used to," Mr. and Mrs. Roy H. Kirch Sr. of Madison would agree. But instead of the 30-year-old house you'd probably have in mind, they'd go you some 200 years better.

They can also demonstrate by means of their own residence, that 1957 has no monopoly on the split-level, built-ins, climate control, the Frank Lloyd Wright concept of letting the site guide the architecture, and other features generally associated with houses of our day.

Owners of Madison's historic Miller Home, built in 1730 by George Washington's Major Luke Miller, they can point to stone walls two to three feet thick that keep the house extra warm in winter and about 20 degrees cooler in summer—without modern air conditioning. They are walls formed of the home's stone foundation, walls that still wear the original white plaster interior facing.

Mr. Kirch (chairman of the board of Edwin A. Kirch & Co., of Newark and Hanover) also proudly points to gracefully thin, nailless oak doors—so heavy that two men would be required to lift them.

CONSTRUCTION WISE, there are endless details that would fascinate even the pure modernist, to say nothing of the student of American history.

Those above-mentioned doors, for example, as well as every door in the house, differ one from the other. No two are alike because it was the thing in those days for neighbors to pitch in with the building. Each in turn made his own individual construction contribution.

One of the doors, called "the cat door," sports a hole at the bottom for the family feline to come and go as a free agent.

Another door wears one of the first locks ever made here

—as well as an old hex mark probably painted on by a guest from the Pennsylvania Dutch country as a good luck symbol. Similarly, the original floor still in use in the present kitchen—used in earlier days as the scullery for vegetable preparation and the like—has an inlaid heart design, a reminder of the philosophy that the kitchen is the heart of the home.

THAT hex-marked door was covered with seven coats of paint. The bottom coat was found to be a cranberry juice and sour cream concoction, applied as a red dye and believed to be one of the earliest attempts at paint making in New Jersey.

The prototypes of many other features popular today in both traditional and modern houses are evident throughout the house—right down to the present preoccupation with "split-level" design.

Built into the side of a hill, the home has entrances at different levels. That on the south side leads into the old basement kitchen, now used as an informal family room which the Kirches still call "the keeping room." This is complete with an old Dutch oven and the original burnt-out bottom, charred cooking kettles hanging above the flagstone hearth.

It was here that the home's first family cooked and did their "heap o' livin'." Among many authentic keeping room furnishings, accenting the original planked maple floor, is an antique harvest table. This would accommodate as many as a dozen farmers at their evening meal after the harvest.

RIGHT at home with it is a tall applewood "linen press" cabinet, an old grandfather's chair and antique captain's chairs. All the fabric colors are keyed to the blues and reds of an Oriental rug. The

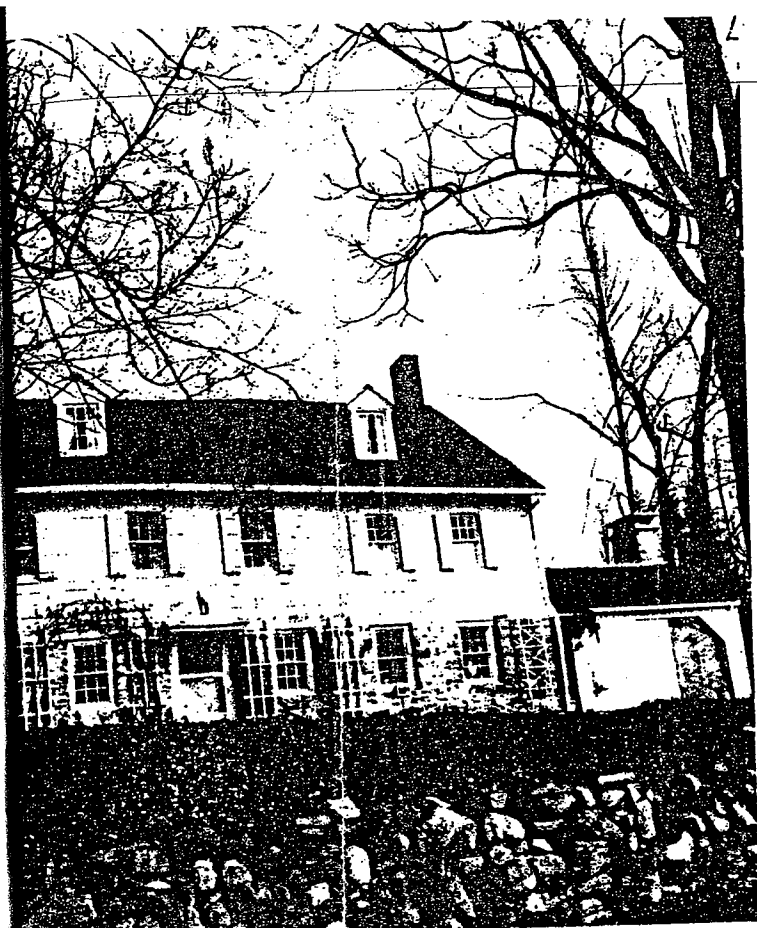
Williamsburg Restoration reveals many Oriental rugs, and research tells us that they made those familiar hooked rugs only after the Oriental rugs were worn out, Mrs. Kirch points out.

THE keeping room is adjacent to the present kitchen that was converted from that old scullery, this kitchen being the home's only modernized room. Here the Colonial and the contemporary blend remarkably side-by-side.

The silvery tone of stainless steel ovens, practically blasted into the room's thick stone wall, harmonizes with a collection of similarly toned antique pewter serving accessories on the fireplace.

Decoratively toning down this modern kitchen equipment are paneled walls with wood grain painted a flattering soft blue; an old pine trestle table; arrowback chairs wearing cherry red cushions; pine cabinets with black Co-

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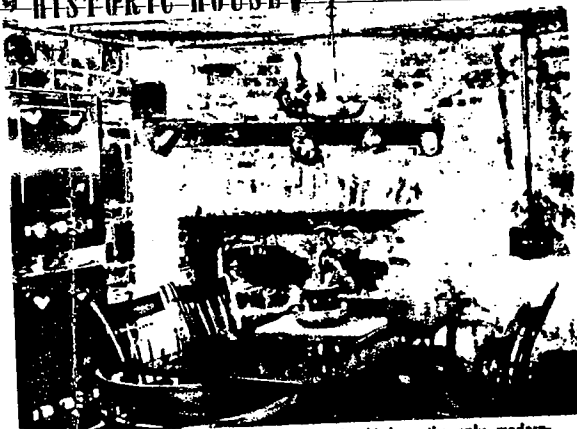


Miller House, now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Roy Kirch Sr., with enclosed terrace at right containing dining-sitting room. Walls two feet thick keep house warm in winter, 20 degrees cooler in summer.



Mr. Kirch sits in red velvet Victorian chair in formal living room that formerly was two rooms. It is decorated with family's treasured possessions rather than with colonial furnishings. Walls are Williamsburg blue.

HISTORIC HOUSE



Original, stone-walled scullery is now the kitchen, the only modernized room in house. Note how stainless steel evens blend with collection of antique pewter on fire place and old pewter ceiling fixture.

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colonial-styled 'linges, and sunny yellow countertops.

FROM the original scullery room on, there had been nothing but an open dirt-floor cellar. In its place now are laundry and powder room areas designed in character with wood paneling and old ceiling beams.

Original ceiling beams in a nearby furnace room still have bark on them. One beam in this furnace room, which was originally used as a jail in Revolutionary times, bears the markings of iron bars. Other beams still retain wrought iron nails upon which meats were hung for curing.

Here, too, is a rock so large that the house was built around it—making those modern houses built around trees and such no so unusual after all.

Above this intriguing area that also played a part in the "underground railroad" of Civil War days, is the aforementioned scullery, or what is now the present kitchen. The latter is adjacent to a recently enclosed terrace now forming a dining-sitting room with a generous glass wall expanse overlooking the home's terraced gardens.

DESPITE the modern feeling of large glass expanse, stone and paneled walls and ceiling beams from an old barn are in keeping with those features characterizing the remainder of the house. Contributing strongly to the feeling of this

room is a panel of antique bull's-eye glass, found at a local antiques show and set into a door here.

The entrance to the home's formal living room and "front foyer"—the latter running from front to back through the house to form a writing area at its far end, is on another level on the north side.

The formal living room differs from the home's general Early American decor in order to utilize many treasured family possessions of other periods. It was planned, as was much of the rest of the interiors, with the guidance of a Bernardsville decorator, Mrs. Cornelia Suydam Herpel.

The formal living room's white fireplace wall, framing a black cement hearth, blends with a white ceiling that is punctuated with ancient exposed beams, with white café curtains framed by short red draperies on brass rods, and with old louvered interior shutters painted white.

SOFT Williamsburg-blue walls, blending with blue damask chair fabric and the blues in an Oriental rug, are flavored by a garnet red velvet Victorian sofa and chair.

This jewel-red harmonizes with a warm rose-red wallpaper adorned with a beige and gold American eagle pattern in the nearby writing room that is a continuation of the identically decorated front foyer. Here, too, is continued the living room's sub-

tle variations of red, white and blue by way of a blue quilted linen cushion upon an antique, handsome wood low-seat. Standing nearby is a Gov. Winthrop desk naturally lighted by a window wearing a short oyster white fringed draw curtain.

The mellow looking front foyer area illustrates further the decorator's desire "to charm people the minute they walk into a home." Here there is a tall old grandfather's clock and a roomy storage chest.

Stairways in the foyer lead both up to the bedrooms and down to the basement level that houses the keeping room, kitchen and dining-sitting room addition.

THE home's unique character begins, however, on still another level. There is a sub-basement from which a secret Indian raid tunnel extends to the old stone forge about 60 feet to the north—now used for off-season storage.

This concern for "storage" today, apparently had its counterpart in early America, for "built-ins" are everywhere throughout this house. These range from china cupboards in the keeping room, to clothes chests filling the space between eaves—to a "spirits" cupboard built into the side of the fireplace in the master bedroom. This was allegedly used originally to provide some "warmth" on cold winter mornings—in the absence at that time of the modern central heating system.

DECEMBER 8, 1957