



Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Shertzer remodeled their older farm house from the basement to the kitchen.

Homestead Notes

Farm family renovates century old house

By SUSAN KAUFFMAN
Feature Writer

If you have considered restoring your old stone farmhouse to its original condition, then you should visit Melvin L. and Kathryn M. Shertzer, Millersville, R1. During the past four years they have removed plaster to uncover stone walls, opened ceilings to reveal the original beams, refinished oak and pine floors and scrapped layers of paint from cabinets, woodwork and stairs to bring out the natural beauty in a house nearly 200 years old.

The Shertzers live on a 100-acre dairy farm purchased 18 years ago. The history of the beautiful pointed stone house reaches back to 1760, according to courthouse records and the ages of neighboring homes. For 14 years the Shertzers left the interior of the house as it was when they took possession. However, in 1973 they started intensive and time-consuming restoration, beginning with the basement. The next year the children's bedrooms and the kitchen were restored and remodelled. In 1975 the dining room and living room were refinished and the master bedroom was finished early this year.

Mrs. Shertzer explained many people comment about their starting in the basement. The basic reason for selecting the basement as a starting point was the fuel shortage. The old double basement had a daylight side which had a huge walk-in fireplace and the family wished to utilize it for heat in the new family room to be made there. To transform the old basement into an attractive and enjoyable room the Shertzers spent long hours chiseling off the old plaster on the walls, fireplace and ceiling so that the original stone walls and hand cut beams

and girders could be exposed. Once the plaster was removed the stones were sand blasted and new mortar was added. The beams, along with all the floors, stairs, cabinets and woodwork were finished with a clear polyurethane varnish to retain the natural color of the wood. The huge fireplace still has the original log across its top.

Williamsburg colors were used throughout the house as Mrs. Shertzer moved from one room to another patching and painting. Mr. Shertzer had the tedious task of scrapping old paint from the woodwork and cabinets. The bedrooms were done in antique white walls, Williamsburg green or red trim on the chair rails, windows, clothes pegs and base boards. The ceilings were painted with Williamsburg white-wash — a very white, textured paint applied with a white-wash brush. The pine floors were sanded and finished with a clear varnish.

The spacious, warm kitchen with its dark cabinets, harvest table, brick fireplace and large tilt-top bench is inviting to the eye and very convenient with its Corning cooktop stove and modern dishwasher. The cabinets above the counter were stripped and refinished and the lower cabinets were made to match the upper ones. The fireplace was opened and faced with brick. The walls are antique white, accented with gold trim. The dining room is antique white with blue woodwork and the living room is white, accented with green. Both rooms have the white-washed ceilings.

The deep windows have most of the old glass panes in them and when a pane does need to be replaced, Mr. Shertzer uses an old pane he has found at auctions. The family vacations in the mountains of Sullivan County and

enjoy looking for bargains in antiques at public auctions while they are there. One novel idea the Shertzers have used is to transform the large pulley wheels once used to hold threshing belts into small tables with marble tops.

The Shertzers have several family antiques such as a desk made around 1850 by Abe Herr of Lampeter, a marble-topped table, and a washbowl set, to name a few. Raymond Rohrer, Manheim, R3, Mrs. Shertzer's brother, refinished many items for them and made the harvest table, benches and tilt-top bench now in the kitchen.

When asked what the most difficult part of the whole restoration was, Mrs. Shertzer answered the chiseling off the plaster from the stone walls in the basement. Mr. Shertzer said taking the varnish off the steps! They warn anyone starting such a task as theirs to allow plenty of time for the work to progress and to expect the unexpected delays and problems to come. Their greatest sense of reward came from turning the basement, "a hopeless sight into something warm, enjoyable and inviting," remarked Mr. Shertzer.

One unusual item in the house not touched in the restoring process is a smokehouse room in the attic. It is a metal-lined room approximately 8 feet by 8 feet. Slits in the chimney were opened in the past to allow the smoke to enter the room at the floor level then return to the chimney through slits at the top.

During these four years of scrapping, painting, planning, the Shertzers have been operating 250 acres and milking 70 cows with the help of their children: Jay - 17, Stephen - 16, Kay - 13 and Scott - 11. Jay and Stephen are

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Country Corner



Gardeners may have 'uncanny' future

By MELISSA PIPER

For the past two years sharp increases have been noted in the amount of home gardens maintained by the American public. Much of the increase can be attributed to the increased food prices and a general feeling that eating natural foods is better for your health.

A recent report stated that during the bicentennial year, the amount of American homes having gardens would increase by 3½ million putting the final tally at 35 million. And while that indicates a whole lot of lettuce, radishes and cantaloupes, it also means that about four percent more families will also use canning as a food preservation method this year.

Those figures bring back memories of last summer when our telephone here rang constantly for days because of shortages of canning lids. It also conjures up the stories of "black-market" selling and an overbuying panic which swept the country as home canners struggled to preserve their produce.

The main concern still spawning is just what supplies of canning equipment will be available when the summer goods come to a ripening peak.

Will there be another year of panic, haseled shoppers and senate hearings? At least in my mind the answer is still to be determined.

A release from one of the major home canning manufacturers which reached our office this week, claimed that they would be producing at least 65 percent more replacement caps and lids for this year's canning season.

While this estimate seems temporarily reassuring it should also be noted that the same amounts of canning accessories will be distributed to the areas as last year. The manufacturer will be taking the average amount of supplies sent to an area during 1974 and '75 and this is what the distributors will have to offer. If a substantial amount of new gardeners begin their harvest in an area then the supplies may not be enough for everyone concerned. This is one aspect of the situation which may need correcting.

The leading company also stated that if supplies are needed in one area of the country then "with the cooperation of the distributors amounts can be diverted promptly to other areas." We hope this is true but again last year the promptness was not always carried out.

All the statistics and estimates are purely conjecture at this point however, many factors will really determine if enough home canning supplies will be required. Drought, floods, frosts and insects along with a host of other possibilities will no doubt have an effect on the need and it will take months before a conclusion can be drawn.

If the manufacturers are giving the consumers correct estimates then perhaps no panic will avail this summer but if information seems difficult to access again this year, with the home canner coming up short, then another season will be spent in concern.

Consumers as well as the manufacturers will have to work together if this summer is to be more pleasant. Panic buying of canning supplies is certainly no answer to the problem and often leads to decreased supplies. Thus pay a little more attention to your neighbor's needs. Also, I hope the manufacturers will turn their attention to the needs of each area with well founded judgements. If this cooperation exists then perhaps home gardening will be enjoyable and helpful as it was intended to be.