

HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND THE TWENTIETH CENTURY KITCHEN:
A CASE FOR VALUES-CENTERED PRESERVATION

by

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(Under the Direction of John C. Waters)

ABSTRACT

This thesis proposes that twentieth century kitchens are valuable resources for historic research. It supplies a methodology for approaching the study of these rooms with an eye toward women's history, African-American studies, social history and material culture. It reveals encouraging results from a survey of house-museums that show a trend toward recognizing and interpreting kitchen spaces. The background information and methodology offer guidance on how to approach and analyze a kitchen for historical research.

INDEX WORDS: Twentieth century kitchens, Values-centered preservation, Women's studies, Building materials, Twentieth century appliances, Interior design, African-American history, Material culture

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
PREFACE.....	xvi
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 OVERVIEW OF KITCHEN DEVELOPMENT: INNOVATIONS, SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION.....	8
The Pre-1900 Kitchen.....	8
The Post 1900 Kitchen.....	11
3 DOMESTIC SERVANTS AND KITCHEN DESIGN.....	26
4 NEW INNOVATIONS: ELECTRICITY, APPLICANCES AND PREPARED FOODS	35
Electrical Service in Urban and Suburban Kitchens	36
Prepared and Prepackaged Foods.....	36
Refrigeration.....	38
Cabinetry	44
Dishwashers.....	51
Stoves	53

	Smaller Appliances.....	56
	Flooring	59
5	A CHRONOLOGY OF TWENTIETH CENTURY KITCHENS	
	THROUGH THE 1950S	66
	1900 – 1920.....	66
	1920s.....	71
	1930s.....	77
	1940s.....	87
	1950s.....	97
6	CASE STUDIES	113
	Case Study 1: A 1929 Tudor Revival Cottage.....	113
	Case Study 2: A 1950s Ranch House	120
	Case Study 3: A 1950s Bungalow	126
	Case Study 4: A 1930s Upper-Income Winter Home.....	131
	Case Study 5: A Survey of House-Museums.....	147
7	CONCLUSION	149
	REFERENCE	152
	APPENDIX	158
	SURVEY FORM	158

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 3.1: Number of servants by race compared to the total number of women employed	28
Table 3.2: 1939 – Domestic servants’ weekly wages by city and household income	29
Table 4.1: Chart of cases of canned goods sold in selected years	36

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 4.1: Plan for placing icebox including exterior ice loading.....	39
Figure 4.2: 1922 model following the lines of an icebox	40
Figure 4.3: 1926 advertisement for electrifying the icebox	40
Figure 4.4: Introduction of Monitor Top	41
Figure 4.5: Integrated refrigeration.....	43
Figure 4.6: Side-by-side refrigeration.....	43
Figure 4.7: Cabinet refrigeration.....	44
Figure 4.8: Double unit refrigeration	44
Figure 4.9: Introduction of 36” as the standard height	45
Figure 4.10: Typical kitchen cabinet of the 1920s.....	45
Figure 4.11: Early proposal of a peninsula	46
Figure 4.12: Early kitchen island	46
Figure 4.13: A very simple pass through	48
Figure 4.14: Pass through with folding blind.....	48
Figure 4.15: Combination pass through and breakfast bar with louvered blind.....	48
Figure 4.16: Elaborate pass through with gilded screen that rises for service to dining room.....	48
Figure 4.17: High-end metal cabinets by St. Charles	50
Figure 4.18: High-end custom wood cabinets by Curtis.....	50
Figure 4.19: Tabletop dishwasher.....	52

	Page
Figure 4.20: Rolling dishwasher	52
Figure 4.21: Typical stove and arrangement for 1920s middle-income kitchen	54
Figure 4.22: Typical range and arrangement for 1920s upper income kitchen	54
Figure 4.23: Typical stove and arrangement for 1930s middle-income kitchen	54
Figure 4.24: Typical stove and arrangement for post-war 1940s middle-income kitchen	54
Figure 4.25: Typical stoves and arrangements for postwar 1940s upper-income kitchens	55
Figure 4.26: Extremely high-end 1950s kitchen.....	55
Figure 4.27: Cutting edge 1950s kitchen with bleached wood cabinets, tile floor, built-in stainless appliances and camouflaged pass through to dining room.....	55
Figure 4.28: Checkerboard on the diagonal in the 1920s	60
Figure 4.29: Another example of checkerboard on the diagonal.....	60
Figure 4.30: A 1920s marbleized finish linoleum laid on the square	60
Figure 4.31: 1930s floor with border	61
Figure 4.32: 1930s inlaid linoleum pattern	61
Figure 4.33: Unidentified material in a 1940s kitchen	61
Figure 4.34: Unidentified material – two tone continuous flooring with inlaid border.....	61
Figure 4.35: 1940s linoleum floor with inlaid border.....	62
Figure 4.36: 1940s continuous flooring with inlaid border	62
Figure 4.37: 1940s – Beginning of flooring alternatives – an inlaid floor of asphalt tile.....	62

Figure 4.38: 1940s flooring alternatives: a pegged wood plank floor to compliment the “Colonial” aspects of this kitchen.....	62
Figure 4.39: The textbook definition of a 1950s middle-income dream kitchen: all white appliances, a green theme and yellow accents.....	63
Figure 4.40: High-end 1950s kitchen with vinyl tile in a wood parquet pattern	63
Figure 4.41: High-end 1950s kitchen with asphalt tile with darker perimeter border	63
Figure 4.42: High-end 1950s kitchen with marbled asphalt tile floor	63
Figure 4.43: 1950s advertisement for linoleum flooring.	64
Figure 4.44: High-end 1950s kitchen with marbled asphalt tile and no borders	64
Figure 4.45: High-end 1950s kitchen with marbled asphalt tile and no borders	64
Figure 4.46: High-end 1950s kitchen with asphalt tile floor and no border	64
Figure 4.47: 1950s advertisement for mosaic tile flooring and counters.....	65
Figure 4.48: 1950s advertisement for rubber tile flooring.....	65
Figure 4.49: Middle-income kitchen with asphalt tile and no borders	65
Figure 5.1: Two views of 1900- era kitchens in the 1930s prior to updating	68
Figure 5.2: Floor plan and photograph of a ca. 1900 kitchen prior to remodeling in the 1930s ..	68
Figure 5.3: Drawing showing ideal kitchen arrangement at the beginning of the 1920s	73
Figure 5.4: Ideal kitchen entry from the early 1920s includes icebox on outside wall, package receipt area, and in-ground garbage receptacle	73
Figure 5.5: Illustration of an ideal kitchen elevation in the early 1920s.....	74

	Page
Figure 5.6: Early appearance of cabinets and counters.....	75
Figure 5.7: Cabinets in background of mid 1920s advertisement	75
Figure 5.8: Early advertisement for modular kitchen cabinet units.....	75
Figure 5.9: 1930s front-loading dishwasher	81
Figure 5.10: “A Kitchen Brought to Date”: Before and after remodeling.....	82
Figure 5.11: “A Kitchen Brought to Date”: Before and after remodeling.....	83
Figure 5.12: Illustration showing to-the-floor stove: refrigerator to-the-floor will follow.....	84
Figure 5.13: Illustration shows integration of built-in dishwasher into dimensions of standardized cabinets	85
Figure 5.14: Front-loading dishwasher as part of a manufactured steel sink unit	86
Figure 5.15: Special cabinet features for a “You May Win this Kitchen” contest in 1946	88
Figure 5.16: Specialized drawers and lazy-susans for corner cabinets designed to increase efficiency and reduce the amount of hard-to-reach space appear in 1940s cabinetry for both middle income and upper income houses	88
Figure 5.17: Compact pantry configurations for middle-income houses in the 1940s.....	89
Figure 5.18: Ideas for enclosing a nearby porch and creating a tasteful dining area as part of the kitchen	93
Figure 5.19: A very basic prefabricated kitchen – typical of the type found in tract housing.....	96
Figure 5.20: A higher quality prefabricated middle-income kitchen with some additional features such as a breakfast bar.....	96

	Page
Figure 5.21: A high end prefabricated kitchen	96
Figure 5.22: Stainless steel sink and drain board.....	96
Figure 5.23: Photograph of a middle-income kitchen in a contemporary house that conforms to the ideals of the open kitchen	99
Figure 5.24: Birch cabinets described above	101
Figure 5.25: “Vent-a-Hood” advertisement – aimed at middle-income housing market	102
Figure 5.26: Formica advertisement from the early 1950s	103
Figure 5.27: Example of 1950s metal prefab cabinets in colors other than white.....	104
Figure 5.28: Example of 1950s middle-income cabinets in natural wood finish	104
Figure 5.29: Example of contemporary metal cabinets	104
Figure 5.30: Design for multi-use kitchen space	104
Figure 5.31: Example of middle-income kitchen with stained wood cabinets and stainless built-in appliances	105
Figure 5.32: Example of 1950s refrigerator fully integrated into contemporary birch cabinetnetwork.....	107
Figure 5.33: Example of 1950s high-end cabinetry with tambour and sliding panels in lieu of hinged cabinet doors.....	107
Figure 5.34: Example of a high-end 1950s kitchen, suitable for creating gourmet foods.....	109

	Page
Figure 5.35: Another example of a high-end 1950s kitchen.....	109
Figure 5.36: Gilt Screen between dining room and kitchen	110
Figure 5.37: Before and after pictures of kitchen revisions made to accommodate a maid-less house	111
Figure 5.38: A smart looking serving bar takes the place of the missing servant thereby allowing civilized dinner service to continue in the dining room.....	112
Figure 6.1: 1978 West Mercer Drive -- December 2008.....	116
Figure 6.2: View of kitchen from service panty – December 2008.....	117
Figure 6.3: View of kitchen from kitchen porch -- December 2008	117
Figure 6.4: Washing machine in niche originally designed for icebox on kitchen porch	118
Figure 6.5: Kitchen storage pantry.....	118
Figure 6.6: Service pantry eating area - facing exterior wall.....	118
Figure 6.7: Original built-in china cabinet in service pantry	118
Figure 6.8: Close up of original light fixture and globe in service pantry	119
Figure 6.9: Built-in ironing board between door to storage pantry (on left) and door to kitchen porch (on right)	119
Figure 6.10: View of kitchen from garage door toward eat-in area.....	122
Figure 6.11: View of kitchen from eat-in area.....	123
Figure 6.12: View of kitchen toward sink and dishwasher.....	123

Figure 6.13: Close-up of “lazy-susan” cabinet in corner – an innovative feature in high-end cabinetry of the period.....	124
Figure 6.14: Close-up of cabinet on countertop for mixer storage.....	124
Figure 6.15: Close-up of original countertop material.....	124
Figure 6.16: View of kitchen toward eat-in area	125
Figure 6.17: Close-up of built-in china cabinet in eat-in area of kitchen	125
Figure 6.18: Glenwood Road – façade	129
Figure 6.19: View of kitchen from laundry/pantry corridor.....	129
Figure 6.20: View of kitchen from stove toward laundry/pantry corridor	130
Figure 6.21: View from dining area toward kitchen.....	130
Figure 6.22: View of kitchen toward sink from dining area door	130
Figure 6.23: Bellefield House – ca. 2008	140
Figure 6.24: Architect’s elevation for north wall of butler’s pantry.....	141
Figure 6.25: Butler’s pantry north cabinet as built by Curtis Woodwork	141
Figure 6.26: Monel metal sink in butler’s pantry.	142
Figure 6.27: South wall of kitchen.....	142
Figure 6.28: Typical chrome-plated outlet cover in the service wing	143
Figure 6.29: Typical chrome plated switch plate cover in the service wing.....	143

	Page
Figure 6.30: Kitchen north wall outlets	143
Figure 6.31: Exterior view of the north wall of the service wing dated 1952	144
Figure 6.32: Architect's original drawing for the kitchen cabinetwork on the south wall (left) and east wall (right).....	144
Figure 6.33: Kitchen south wall cabinets as built by Curtis Woodwork	145
Figure 6.34: Kitchen east wall cabinets as built by Curtis Woodwork.....	145
Figure 6.35: North wall cabinet added sometime during the 1960s	146
Figure 6.36: West wall of kitchen with original wood/coal burning range	146

PREFACE

This thesis proposes that the American kitchen from 1900 through the middle of the twentieth century is a valuable historical resource holding a wealth of information for a range of academic applications including women's studies, African-American history, and the study of material culture. The recent increased interest in the preservation and interpretation of kitchens in house-museum settings is encouraging.¹ It is especially encouraging considering the fact that the official literature available from the National Park Service that guides preservation does not place any value on kitchens, which are lumped in as one of many secondary areas that are viewed as expendable. A correct understanding of typical kitchens from various points in time can assist in properly restoring and interpreting these rooms. This thesis sets out to provide that understanding.

Outside of museum settings, one will discover that the pre-1960s kitchens one encounters have often been remodeled at least once if not more often. With the appropriate methodology at hand, this need not be seen as a hurdle but rather an additional layer of information to be considered if one understands the primary components and the impetus behind their utilization at various points in time. Again, this thesis provides the information necessary to guide this type of study.

It is the author's intention to encourage more twentieth century house-museums to adopt a plan of restoration and interpretation of their kitchens for the benefit of their visitors. With respect to private residences, it is not proposed that ordinances be adopted that would interfere

¹ Note: See the survey of house museums (Appendix).

with a homeowner's rights to create the kitchen that he or she would like to have; only that – in a historic district or National Register property – due diligence be taken in recording and preserving historic elements prior to their alteration in order to have a clear record available for study.

The methodology for the study of kitchens that is laid out in this thesis begins with the history of the kitchen and some of the implications that historians and sociologists have attributed to the development of this space in the twentieth century. This is followed by a deeper look at the effect of domestic servants on kitchen design as their presence certainly affected these designs. Next, an in-depth look is taken at the introduction and adoption of new appliances and products that changed the way the kitchen had previously been used.

Having established the components and language of the kitchen, the twentieth century is broken down into periods in order to study the development of the space chronologically. Due to the fact that kitchens developed independently of the architectural styles of the houses in which they were located, a chronological method provides the clearest approach for analysis. The kitchens studied are found either in middle or upper-income residences that are primarily located in urban or suburban areas, as these would have had the earliest and best access to developing trends. Attributes are assigned to each period that reflect the typical room during each particular period.

Using the chronology of typical rooms, cases studies are performed. The kitchens under study are compared to the typical rooms of their period for conformation. Assertions are made on the points on which the rooms do and do not conform based on the research.

The case studies of kitchens provide the point at which their true value is revealed, as it then becomes possible to support or refute the assertions made by historians and sociologists

regarding the room and its relationship to stakeholders such as women or servants. It also becomes possible to imagine the realities of life that informed the decisions made by homeowners to adopt some innovations while rejecting others. In the process, the people of a particular period become less abstract, and a clearer understanding and appreciation of the larger history is possible.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Current historic preservation methods tend to concentrate on exteriors to the exclusion of interiors. In those limited circumstances where interiors are considered, such as in house museums, preferential treatment is given to living rooms, dining rooms, and bedrooms over areas referred to as secondary spaces. The term “secondary spaces” includes such areas as bathrooms, kitchens, laundries, servants’ rooms, closets, and garages. Unlike primary spaces, which tend to reflect only the vagaries of taste during a particular period of time, secondary spaces more often provide rich resources for the study and understanding of material culture and the evolution of social history. This is particularly true of the kitchen, a space strongly associated with women and servants, where a broad panorama of twentieth century innovation can be found. In spite of this value, kitchen spaces are often viewed as expendable due to either a lack of understanding of their interpretive value, or as the result of meeting demands for mechanical installations and office space.

Twentieth century American residential architecture largely tended to ignore modernism in favor of traditional styles such as Colonial-revival or neo-classical. The modern world did, however, enter the American home – albeit through the back door – for regardless of the exterior dress of a house, and without reference to the finish and furnishings of its public rooms, kitchens tended to evolve independently of the style of the house or the interior décor. Whether Tudor bungalow or Spanish-colonial, each tends to have originally had very similar kitchens with differences being more of a reflection of their period of construction than an extension of

stylistic design of the house as a whole. While American homeowners continued to prefer traditional furnishings and coziness in their other rooms, the kitchens proceeded to evolve toward the stark modernism that forward-thinking architects had proposed for entire structures during the first half of the twentieth century; by the 1920s, kitchen style was largely independent from the rest of the house.² It is in kitchens that one will find the ready acceptance of shiny porcelain finishes and gleaming chrome. Kitchens utilized every electronic convenience as quickly as they became affordable. Twentieth century kitchens reflect the declining availability of domestic servants along with the limited but gradually increasing input from women on their own traditional sphere of influence for, although considered a woman's domain, the design of the kitchen was most often under the control of men during the first half of the 20th century.

It is possible to find women's voices commenting on kitchens. Reaching back into the nineteenth century and Harriett Beecher Stowe's works on the subject, and continuing into the 1920s with magazine articles penned by women, the subject of the kitchen was discussed by women, but in most instances the actual design was settled between the architect (if used), the builder, and the man of the house who, until the 1950s, was most often considered to be the primary homeowner. Even so, the arrangement and use of the kitchen was a much-discussed topic in magazines that targeted women, and from the 1920s through the 1950s this discussion gradually evolved from "how to use" to "how to design" the space in which women worked. Evidence of these shifts is embedded in the kitchens themselves.

The use of domestic servants underwent a change during the period from 1900 through the 1950s. This period saw a major shift away from live-in help to daily help as the norm, although daily help continued to be an aspiration for most urban middle-income housewives until

² Sandy Isenstadt. "Visions of Plenty: Refrigerators in America around 1950." *Journal of Design History* 11-4 (1998): 312.

the beginning of World War II. The economic depression of the 1930s actually served to increase the number of households with domestic servants as job alternatives for unskilled female workers disappeared with the economic depression. Even though the use of domestic servants declined considerably during and after World War II, servants did not disappear entirely, and postwar kitchen design for upper-middle income houses show an increased sensitivity to the people who worked – and occasionally lived – in the service areas of the house. Designs from the period reveal the necessity of providing a pleasant and convenient work environment if one hoped to engage the services of a maid. It is also a tacit acknowledgment of the fact that the family was frequently found visiting and entertaining in the kitchen, even in upper-income residences. At the same time, exterior access to the kitchens continued to reinforce the prevailing class system as it existed between servants and the families they served.

Technological innovations including the widespread use of electricity in urban areas, the inevitable introduction of laborsaving devices, the development of prepared and semi-prepared foods also altered the kitchen design and the lives of those who worked there. Case studies reveal the degree of utilization and the effects of the aforementioned developments, which can best be seen, in situ, in actual kitchens.

The fact that kitchens are one of the most frequently updated and remodeled rooms in a house can actually prove beneficial as long as a clear understanding of the original kitchens exists, for an altered kitchen can show what innovations were considered essential at different points in time compared, for example, to what was merely advertised or otherwise promoted in magazines at the time. The requirements for analyzing a twentieth century kitchen include: understanding what constituted an original kitchen at specific points in time; knowing what features to look for during those specific periods; and being aware of regional differences with

respect to the use of servants and the availability of conveniences. By dividing kitchens from the first half of the twentieth century into three periods, it is possible to determine the arrangement and material elements typically found in each period; compare the actual kitchens with the literature on social history; and determine the validity of assumptions that have been made. Because the study of actual kitchens can provide tactile evidence that supports, refutes, or adds new knowledge to current social history theories, more emphasis should be placed on the documentation and preservation of kitchens.

Current trends in historic preservation support this sort of focus on the social value of restored spaces. Historian and preservationist Randall Mason has identified two cultures within the profession of preservation. The older culture is that of the pragmatic/technical approach in which preservationists provide knowledge of methods and procedures for preserving structures but very little information about why they should be preserved. This approach has proved to be neither particularly appealing nor motivating for those without an inherent interest in old buildings. The newer approach identified by Mason is a strategic/political approach whereby purpose is added to skill allowing non-preservationists to be engaged as partners.³ Mason states that it is axiomatic that historic preservation reflects, in some manner, its society in the choices of what gets to be preserved, how it is preserved and interpreted, and who makes the decision.⁴ He calls this approach Values-Centered Preservation.

The evaluation of a site for preservation from a values-centered perspective has four distinct advantages: 1) it enables a holistic understanding of the site; 2) values-centered preservation leads to an acknowledgement and inclusion of a greater range of stakeholders; 3) it is based on comprehensive knowledge about a site's values, which is essential to support the

³ Randall Mason. "Theoretical and Practical Arguments for Values-Centered Preservation." *CRM Journal* (Summer, 2006), 28.

⁴ *Ibid.* 21.

long view of stewardship; and 4) values-centered preservation reveals serious gaps in knowledge about the historic environment and how the historic environment is used.⁵ As Values-Centered Preservation recognizes that any particular thing or place has a number of different values in the sense of characteristics, its application to a kitchen works very well, as this is a space that reflects a variety of people and subject matters.

The study of twentieth century kitchens from a values-centered approach reveals that they hold an enormous amount of value as primary resource material for the study of the evolution of social history. Furthermore, twentieth century kitchens address the interests of a variety of stakeholders and reveal interior aspects of women's history, African-American history, and the evolution of material culture in a clear and unique way. This serves to broaden both their appeal and value. It is, therefore, imperative that more attention should be given to secondary spaces generally, and to kitchens specifically, in order to maintain historic preservation as a timely and relevant pursuit that can inform and serve the interests of a broader range of people.

One needs to look no further than our official guides, the National Park Service Briefs, for evidence that kitchens are currently assigned little or no value in preservation. *Preservation Brief 18* deals with the preservation of interiors. It states that "secondary spaces are generally more utilitarian in appearance and size than primary spaces," and that "secondary spaces may accept greater change in the course of work without compromising the building's historic character."⁶ No recommendation for documentation of the original space is made.

Implementing these instructions often includes altering the spaces to accommodate office or storage needs. Kitchens are also among the first spaces to be compromised when retrofitting HVAC systems or creating ADA compliance. This negligent approach is reflective of the older

⁵ Ibid. 35.

⁶ "Rehabilitating Interiors in Historic Buildings: Identifying and Preserving Character-Defining Elements." *Preservation Brief 18*. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service: U.S. Department of the Interior (1988), 2.

“pragmatic/technical” preservation method described by Mason. This is hopefully passing away in favor of the newer values-centered approach whereby the true importance and values of kitchen spaces may come to be appreciated.

While the value and interest of old kitchens may have been lost on official preservationists, the value they hold for average people has been noted for a long time. In 1930, the Telfair House museum in Savannah, Georgia, opened its nineteenth century kitchens to the public for the first time. In commenting on her impressions for a magazine article, writer Mary Ralls Dockstader observed that visitors who rushed through the main house tended to linger for hours in the kitchen spaces. Dockstader expressed the impressions of a citizen of the early twentieth century when she wrote, “The feeling one comes away with from an hour spent in the dim old stone-flagged rooms is apt to be mixed -- a little glad and a little sorry. Our own generation has gained immeasurably in time and laborsaving, in sureness of results, for good cooking is now, with any effort at all, a foregone conclusion. But we have lost romance.”⁷ She continues her article by noting that she doubts the children of her own time will find much that is romantic when they think back on their own mothers’ kitchens. She regrets the sheer dependability of modern cooking and the fact that new kitchens are so small compared to the nineteenth century kitchen she is visiting; the hospitality of the kitchen itself has been compromised in her time.⁸

If Dockstader was a journalist in 1930, she may well have been old enough to remember bits and pieces of the nineteenth century firsthand. If so, then she would have been quite right to compare such a kitchen with the typical kitchen of 1930 and come to the conclusion that the

⁷ Mary Ralls Dockstader. “The Telfair Kitchens.” *House Beautiful* 67-2 (Feb. 1930), 210.

⁸ *Ibid.* 188.

comparison made her “a little glad and a little sorry” for the pre-1900 kitchen, itself, was a study in contrasts.

CHAPTER 2

**OVERVIEW OF KITCHEN DEVELOPMENT: INNOVATIONS, SOCIAL
IMPLICATIONS AND HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION**

The Pre-1900 Kitchen

In order to fully appreciate and understand the developments of the twentieth century kitchen it is necessary to have an understanding of what came before it. It is also important to understand some of the assertions and theories that have been assigned to changes in the kitchen by historians and sociologists regarding their greater implications in the history of women, African-Americans, immigrants, the American class system, the American economic system, and material culture.

It is doubtful that the motives behind the acceleration of changes in the kitchen in the twentieth century were as benign as simply making life easier for women. Conversely, it does not seem likely that the changes are evidence of a sinister plot on the part of men to hold women in their places. Although both theories have been advanced to varying degrees, the truth quite likely lies somewhere between the two extremes. It is probable that both motives contributed in some degree to the direction the changes took or did not take, and it is extremely likely that all of this was strongly directed by the natural elements of a consumer economy. In any event, the story of the twentieth century kitchen really begins in the nineteenth century.

Food preparation, the most time consuming of household duties, had remained largely unchanged for thousands of years and required only four basic components: fire, water, cooking

vessels, and the food to be prepared. Over time, the preparation had moved from an open fire to a fireplace. The nineteenth century's primary contribution to the advancement of food preparation was the development of the enclosed cooking range in 1840.⁹ This served two functions: 1) it allowed the cook to stand up, and 2) it tended -- to a point -- to contain the smoke and heat.

The nineteenth century kitchens remained, however, very imperfect places for those who labored there. Historian Steven Gdula describes them as hot, dirty, smelly, and dangerous.¹⁰ He states that pre-1900 kitchens were "as close an approximation to hell on earth as one could find." With only the most basic ingredients such as flour, sugar, salt, tea and coffee available as preprocessed goods, practically everything was prepared from scratch. The kitchen was a combination slaughterhouse, restaurant, and cannery where the household's daily nutritional demands were met in addition to preparing and preserving the foods that would be used tomorrow, next week, and next season. A steady stream of wood, coal, water, and basic foodstuffs flowed into the room, which produced an equally steady stream of food to the dining room and larder while ash and scraps went out the back door. Poorly ventilated and poorly lit, the lack of reliable refrigeration only added to the unpleasant smells and deplorable atmosphere.

The initial solution – for those who could afford it – was to keep the kitchen completely separated from the house as much as possible. In instances where this could not be accomplished by full separation, the kitchen and its attendant smoke and odors were kept at bay through a series of pantries designed to keep the nuisances as far from the dining room as possible. In wealthier homes, the increasing distance between the dining room and the kitchen was just one of many problems dealt with by servants where, in addition to the pantries that

⁹ Christina Hardyman. *From Mangle to Microwave: Mechanization of Household Work*. New York: Polity Press (1988), 113.

¹⁰ Steven Gdula. *The Warmest Room in the House*. New York: Bloomsbury (2008), 4.

accessed the dining room, a compliment of rooms, such as food storage pantries and “cold” rooms, began to be attached to the perimeter of the kitchen. The pantry toward the dining room - often referred to as the “butler’s pantry” -- become the clean-up and storage area for the dining room china and silver in addition to controlling the flow of traffic between the service areas and public areas of the house.¹¹ Butler’s pantries came to include sinks constructed of soft metal chosen to reduce china breakage.¹² In middle-class homes, dirty china from the dining room passed on through the butler’s pantry to the kitchen for washing before being returned back to the pantry for storage. The lady-of-the-house in the middle-income home accepted the imperfect logistics as one of the many burdens necessary to keep her family comfortable.

Nineteenth century kitchens and the women who made them function had a champion in Catherine Beecher who felt that better designs could relieve a great deal of the burden of the kitchen. She dealt not only with better design of the space itself but was concerned with improved designs for everything in the kitchen from the pastry counter to the flour bin to the stove. Reflecting the extant ideal of the time, namely that the correct house style -- primarily Gothic Revival -- could contribute to the moral well-being of the occupants, Beecher proposed that adopting her suggestions would protect housewives from the assaults of the emerging industrial society and better fit them for their natural responsibilities as emotionally supportive wives and inspiring mothers. She strongly promoted houses that could be operated without the assistance of servants and further felt, perhaps naively, that both rich and poor women would find common ground that transcended class differences in houses that they themselves could

¹¹ Ellen Lupton, and J. Abbott Miller. *The Bathroom, The Kitchen, and the Aesthetics of Waste: A Process of Elimination*. Dalton MA: Studley Press (1992), 44.

¹² David J. Cole, Eve Browning, and Fred E. H. Schroeder. *Encyclopedia of Modern Everyday Inventions*. Westport CN: Greenwood Press (2003), 99.

operate without assistance.¹³ Her use of the word “haven” to describe these idealized houses was later used by historians such as Delores Hayden to describe a type of house or neighborhood in which women were isolated – either on purpose or indirectly – which resulted in their being cut off from employment opportunities that lie outside the home. Hayden also asserts that technology was initially introduced into the home – and by extension into the kitchen – in the twentieth century under the guise of lightening the load of the housewife and bringing Beecher’s vision nearer to reality. Along with these new technologies came ever increasing standards of housekeeping that in the end failed to produce a happy housewife but instead a woman struggling to keep up with the new standards.¹⁴

The Post-1900 Kitchen

Whether or not Hayden’s assertions bear out, technological changes in the twentieth century became possible first and foremost through the development of domestic electrical service.¹⁵ This coupled with rudimentary developments in refrigeration made the practical application of the emerging field of home economics possible. It was ultimately, however, the development of the small electric motor that would permit the acceleration toward what would become the twentieth century kitchen.¹⁶

The method in which people chose to incorporate technological advances into their kitchens was now guided by new thoughts on a woman’s workplace and how she performed her domestic work. By the mid-twentieth century, these approaches had seen three incarnations. The first, from approximately 1900 to 1920, saw the ideal kitchen as a laboratory. The second

¹³ Delores Hayden. *Redesigning the American Dream*. New York: W. W. Norton (1984), 68.

¹⁴ Hayden. 75-6.

¹⁵ Gdula. 2.

¹⁶ Lupton. 13.

phase, from 1920 to 1940, reflected the kitchen as a woman's office the operation of which was based on the efficient factory model. The post-World War II era through the late 1950s reflected a coming together of hundreds of advances that, for the first time, began to free the housewife from the drudgery of the kitchen to the point that the room could actually begin to be incorporated into the larger home having finally become safe, odor-free, and attractive. In each period, the women who lived and worked in these kitchens would have considered the spaces to be "modern" or "up-to-date." At each point, Americans had to look no further than their own kitchens to see the difference a few decades could make.¹⁷

During the 1900 to 1920 phase, the ideal kitchens promoted by efficiency experts and social theorists attempted to deal with ideas of sanitation and efficiency by adopting a laboratory model as the goal for kitchens. Although actual implementation may have seemed slow, a common goal and consensus existed between design professionals, domestic scientists, and housewives on the need for creating better efficiency in the kitchen.¹⁸ Such changes were sometimes as simple as replacing root cellars with nearby kitchen pantries¹⁹ but are more clearly marked with the introduction of moveable cabinets specifically designed for use in the kitchen.

The goal remained, however, to reflect a scientific attention to the arrangement and operation of the kitchen: an idea that gathered steam when Fannie Farmer's *Boston Cooking School Cookbook* was first published in 1896. In her cookbook, Farmer insisted on exact measurements in order to insure consistent, reliable results.²⁰ The concept of precision was coupled with time and motion studies designed to make the kitchen more efficient. These studies resulted in proposals that the kitchen should be sorted into workstations with the tools essential

¹⁷ Gdula. 2.

¹⁸ Mary Anne Beecher. "Promoting the 'Unit Idea': Manufactured Kitchen Cabinets (1900-1950). *APT Bulletin*. 32-2/3 (2001), 27.

¹⁹ Gdula. 2.

²⁰ Mary Drake McFeely. *Can She Bake an Apple Pie?* Amherst: Univ. of Mass. Press, 2000: 34.

to various kitchen jobs at hand in the specified area. This led to a compartmentalized work area concept: very similar to the design found, appropriately, in a scientific laboratory, which in turn led to new ideas in job-appropriate storage.²¹

The nearest thing to job-specific cabinetwork for the kitchen in the nineteenth century had really not extended beyond the butler's pantry where site-built cabinets and drawers were frequently installed for china and silver storage.²² The late nineteenth century had seen the advent of moveable cabinets designed specifically for kitchens with the introduction of "kitchen dressers" in the 1890s. These initially tended to be product line extensions from manufacturers of general storage furniture with no particular features to address the peculiarities of the kitchen; anything with shelves and a couple of drawers was sold as a kitchen cabinet.²³ By 1900, however, a lucrative market for kitchen storage became apparent and more manufacturers entered the field competing along lines of efficiency and compactness. The kitchen-specific cabinet systems produced in wood and steel came to be known universally by the name of one of the manufacturers as "Hoosier" cabinets.²⁴

The dawning of the twentieth century also saw a rising emphasis on sanitation in the kitchen. This was no empty fad but rather an extension of the emerging view that condemned Victorian excess in design on everything from packaging to appliances to furniture as being unsanitary by nature and difficult to clean.²⁵ It might be asserted that sanitation concerns provided as much of a motive for increased household standards as Hayden's theory that the standards were a response to calculated technology designed to benefit the industrial market.

²¹ McFeely. 42.

²² Beecher. 27.

²³ Ibid. 28.

²⁴ Beecher. 29.

²⁵ Lupton. 2.

The concern with sanitation was driven by actual events. The infamous instance of typhoid outbreak in the northeast that had occurred at the end of the nineteenth century had been laid to one “Typhoid Mary” -- a cook -- who was discovered to have continuously failed to wash her hands properly after going to the bathroom -- presumably through ignorance -- spreading her disease through her cooking.²⁶ In addition to communicable disease, the public became increasingly aware that processed foods -- particularly flour -- were not necessarily purely made of wheat. An attempt to correct the problem of adulterated and impure food supplies was made in 1906 with the passage of the federal Pure Food Act, which was responding to instances of women storming local markets in the demand of higher levels of sanitation.²⁷ In retrospect, these protests might be seen as examples of increasing levels of political action by women, but the fact remains that food conditions of the time demanded some sort of action.

In addition to solutions being sought in the public realm, attention was directed toward what could actually be accomplished in the kitchen itself -- changes that would emphasize sanitation and economic use of time. For this reason, science laboratories began to be viewed as the model on which the perfect kitchen should be designed and home economics, which had become established as an academic discipline in the 1890s, took the leadership role in defining the kitchen along lines that were compatible with the “science of consumption.”²⁸ Laboratories, with their organized cabinets and sanitized workspaces, provided the perfect paradigm for a kitchen.

Just as scientists sanitized their workspaces, so did American housewives begin to use ammonia and carbolic acid in an effort to keep their own kitchen spaces free from infection.²⁹

²⁶ Gdula. 11.

²⁷ Ibid. 10.

²⁸ Lupton. 12.

²⁹ Gdula. 13.

Most laboratory floors and walls were tiled where possible, with other surfaces painted for easy cleaning. Modern kitchens began to be tiled, and paint companies suggested that woodwork should receive two coats of easy-to-clean paint topped off with a coat of varnish as one way of creating cleanable surfaces in kitchens.³⁰ Gdula notes that kitchens further copied laboratories by utilizing good lighting, good ventilation, and dust-free utensil storage.³¹

The laboratory principle for kitchens was frequently combined with time-and-motion layouts more frequently associated with factories. Christine Frederick offered kitchen design tips in *Ladies' Home Journal* during the early 1900s that addressed kitchen work surfaces and issues of storage based on the assembly line model of the modern factory.³² Frederick also challenged the wisdom of the traditional pantry that added miles of walking between the kitchen and the dining room in an attempt to keep the problems of the kitchen separated from the house.³³

Enameled tabletops began to replace wood tops during the period 1900-1920.³⁴ In middle-income homes, linoleum and congoleum floor coverings found favor for their seamless, non-absorbent and easy-to-clean surfaces.³⁵ Betty Crocker advertisements showed women working in these ideal kitchens dressed in starched, white uniforms reminiscent of laboratory jackets or nurses' uniforms, further emphasizing the scientific aspects of the kitchen.³⁶

Although the emphasis was clearly placed on sanitation, style was not completely eclipsed. A 1905 *House Beautiful* survey found that most of its reader requests regarding kitchen

³⁰ Ibid. 13.

³¹ Ibid. 14.

³² Lupton. 43.

³³ Lupton. 44.

³⁴ Gdula. 14.

³⁵ Ibid. 15.

³⁶ Ibid. 32.

design had to do with appearance.³⁷ Albeit the agreement was that the appearance should be sanitary, concern was expressed that the “prescriptive sameness” that was being espoused was robbing the kitchen of its uniqueness in favor of conformity.³⁸ It was also thought that kitchens were becoming smaller in proportion to the rest of the house, and that fewer people were to be found milling about in that room.³⁹

Between 1910 and 1920, the ideal standard kitchen arrangement began to include the placement of the sink beneath a window flanked by two, tall cabinets that could be built-in but were more frequently modular.⁴⁰ The placement of the sink below a window became a standard part of kitchen arrangement for the next fifty years. Although no authoritative assertion has been discovered to explain this new convention, one really needs to look no further than the poor lighting of the period for an incentive. Even in homes with electric service, a single bulb fixture in the center of the kitchen ceiling served as the standard for illumination. A sink below the window would at least solve the problem during daytime.

The movement away from the sterile laboratory toward the kitchen as a woman’s central office in the home began in the 1920s. Although scientific principles were not completely abandoned, and emphasis on hygiene continued to increase, the ideal of the efficient factory took the lead in kitchen design.⁴¹ As the head of a home office in an efficient factory-kitchen, the middle-class American housewife was called upon to support the national economy by buying products: processed foods, and kitchen equipment.⁴² She in turn created products from these materials that moved along to the dining room while the scrap material went out the back door.

³⁷ Ibid. 15.

³⁸ Ibid. 7.

³⁹ Ibid. 16.

⁴⁰ Lupton. 52.

⁴¹ McFeely. 44.

⁴² McFeely. 48.

Kitchen design conformed itself to this new ideal of providing the central office for the middle-class woman as a “good manager.”⁴³ Women’s historian Phyllis Palmer asserts that the typical middle class woman at this time defined her work as the rationalized, sublimated work of her husband in a dynamic where housewives portrayed their work as managerial and economic: like the husband’s work but in a different environment.⁴⁴ Palmer, like Hayden, sees more to the obsession with sanitation than simple cleanliness. She notes that dirt is not a scientific fact but a principal means to arrange cultures and observes that in the eighteenth century, the word “dirty” was used to describe working class men and women rather than a state of being or situation to be corrected.⁴⁵

These positions cannot be dismissed as elitist academic interpretations. Magazine articles in the mainstream press of the period recognized that there were problems with the ever-increasing standards that were being proposed and accepted as “normal” by middle-income housewives. “The shining kitchens we see pictured in advertisements are the despair of overworked housewives,” declares one writer. She continues that the workshop may not be the best guide for setting up an efficient kitchen as it creates an extraordinary amount of handling to keep the room clean.⁴⁶

Psychological and social motives aside, ease of cleaning was facilitated by a marked preference for stoves and refrigerators that were raised on legs. Wall mounted kitchen sinks with no enclosures below also made for easy wall-to-wall cleaning as did the movable, single cabinet that tended to serve for storage.

⁴³ McFeely. 52.

⁴⁴ Phyllis Palmer. *Domesticity and Dirt: Housewives and Domestic Servants in the United States, 1920-1945*. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press (1989): 147

⁴⁵ Palmer. 138.

⁴⁶ Elva D. Hoover. “The Cleaning Story Concluded.” *House Beautiful* 51-6 (June 1922): 574.

Change in the kitchen was certainly affected by the increase in the sheer variety of processed foods available during the 1920s and 1930s. The first wave of mass-production and mass-marketing of packaged and canned foods occurred during this period with the introduction of such staples as boxed cereals, Green Giant vegetables, and Dole pineapple. Semi-prepared foods also mark the point at which shopping habits began to be altered. Instead of having to do daily marketing, the urban and suburban housewife could begin to keep more foods on hand, which gave rise to the new supermarket idea while simultaneously creating a need for better in-home storage arrangements.⁴⁷

Aesthetics in the kitchen were given a boost with the development of new products such as Bakelite. Invented by Leo Baekland in the 1920s, this product found myriad uses among which was as non-heat transferring handles for cookware and stoves. This motivated a market that was ready to replace otherwise serviceable cooking utensils with contemporary styling that utilized new materials simply to look up-to-date.⁴⁸

The use of electric appliances began in earnest in the 1920s. Coal and wood-fired ranges began to give way to gas and electric ranges. These new stoves were constructed of easy-to-clean, porcelain-finished metal, designed on legs to facilitate cleaning the floor beneath: a “looking back” to the previous era’s emphasis on sanitation.⁴⁹ The production of combination fuel stoves, typically gas and coal burning, facilitated the transition away from stoves that used wood or coal exclusively.⁵⁰ The most compelling advantage of all was the luxury of temperature controls for stove eyes and ovens, which began to be available in the late 1920s.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Gdula. 36.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 37.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 56.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 56.

⁵¹ McFeely. 41.

The typical kitchen of the early to mid-1920s did not contain built-in cabinets. The “Hoosier” style cabinet, however, was steadily updated and redesigned throughout the first quarter of the twentieth century in order to maintain its appeal to an ever more demanding consumer. In the process, standardization of sizes and depths to accommodate modular systems of combinable units anticipated the advent of the continuous kitchen that would ultimately emerge in the 1930s.⁵²

The movement toward built-in cabinets began toward the end of the 1920s. Beginning with the premise that the sink should be placed below a window, and fostered by the uniform sizes introduced by manufacturers of movable, modular kitchen storage units, the stage was set for the development of the standard American kitchen. Whereas the prior use of one or two standing cabinets had emphasized verticality, the ideal 1930s kitchen presented a horizontal appearance. A kitchen with two horizontal layers began through the use of continuous surface countertops over built-in base cabinets, above which were shallower horizontal ribbons of upper cabinets mounted to the wall.

The existing manufacturers of mobile kitchen furniture largely addressed the market for uninterrupted or continuous kitchen cabinets. Three types of cabinet arrangements began to appear on floor plans: the “L” shape; the “U” shape; and the single wall strip. Using the same enamel finished metal that they had used for “Hoosier” cabinets, and taking full advantage of standardization, these manufacturers were able to produce economical cabinet systems for use both in new construction and in remodeling.

The new horizontal design, coupled with standardization that had begun with manufactured cabinets in the 1920s, began to be reflected in appliance design.⁵³ Flattop, box-

⁵² Lupton. 50.

⁵³ Ibid. 52.

type stove designs began in the 1930s. Slipping in alongside built-in counters of the same height and depth, these stoves -- the design of which endured into the 1960s -- nearly completed the integrated kitchen.⁵⁴ The refrigerator was the last hold out. Difficult to dimension into the twenty-four-inch depth dictated by the countertops, the refrigerator would remain a stand-alone object in most kitchens until the 1950s.

By 1940, the typical middle-income kitchen in an urban or suburban area had either been designed and built – or remodeled – to accommodate continuous cabinetry. Among the features that were almost invariable was the placement of a double bowl sink beneath an outside window. An electric refrigerator and a gas or electric range would have comprised the essential major appliances without which no kitchen could operate. Although the inclusion of some sort of eat-in area that was close at hand to the food preparation area was not necessarily universal it was certainly not rare. The space referred to as the butler’s pantry often remained between the dining room and kitchen, but by 1940 it more frequently served double duty as both a buffer to the kitchen and an informal albeit convenient dining area for the family.

In cases where the upper-income kitchen reflected new design, it had frequently come to adopt the continuous kitchen arrangement including built-in cabinets of a higher grade than that found in the middle-income kitchen. Wood cabinetry of a fine quality might be chosen, but this is not to imply that there was a prejudice against metal cabinets. Metal cabinetry was produced for the high-end market but of a much thicker gauge of metal and with finer fittings. The kitchen still tended to maintain larders and a full-service butler’s pantry. Eat-in areas that were in extremely close proximity to the stove are usually noted on floor plans as being for the servants’ use. Although breakfast rooms are oftentimes included on plans, these are more for the comfort

⁵⁴ Jane Busch. “Cooking Competition Technology in the Domestic Market in the 1930s.” *Technology and Culture* 24-2 (Apr. 1983): 225.

of the family as a less formal alternative to the larger dining room and not so much as a means of creating a more efficient work area for those who served these rooms. In spite of this, however, most changes that were made in upper income kitchens were probably used as enticements to engage the ever more difficult-to-find household help.

Household help for the middle-income family was an ongoing problem that was varied by region. Middle-income households in the south, for example, continued to expect to have at least some form of domestic servant well into the middle of the twentieth century. In this instance, the housemaid – typically black – carried the greater burden for the middle-class woman and often without access to many of the technological improvements that were becoming available.⁵⁵

The idea of the kitchen as the core of a woman's appropriate work continued to gain ground in the 1930s during which time homemaking came increasingly to be portrayed as a vocation. High school courses⁵⁶ in home economics became required classes for young women, and the study – enforced or voluntary – certainly had an effect on decisions these women would make regarding kitchen design in the future.⁵⁷

The development of the twentieth century kitchen was interrupted by the world war from 1941 to 1945. As production shifted to war materials, innovations that had been stalled by the economic depression were brought to a complete standstill for the duration of the war. The post-war period, however, picked right up where things had left off in 1940. Pent-up demand

⁵⁵ Palmer. 147.

⁵⁶ Note: These courses were comprehensive and included such subjects as: provision of food for the family, furnishing and care of the home, consumer buying, management of material resources in the home, and application of the arts and sciences to home management among the areas of study. (See: "U.S. Advisory Committee on Education. *Vocational Education, Staff Study* 8. Wash., D.C.: U.S. Govt. Printing Office (1938): 141.)

⁵⁷ Palmer. 99.

temporarily outstripped ability to produce as manufacturing transferred back from war materials to domestic products

Post-war design for new kitchens in the 1940s continued with the integrated appearance that had been developing in the 1930s while softening the pristine appearance associated with the efficient office look. Further developments in the way of standard appliances included the home freezer: a response to an increase in the variety of frozen foods available.

The physical layout of the kitchen began to change dramatically. A laundry area was often either included directly in the kitchen or very nearby. Eat-in kitchen areas became more common. Although the overall square-footage of new houses declined for middle-income homeowners in the decade immediately following the war, the ratio of kitchen space relative to the remainder of the house increased. In many cases this was due to the expansion of the kitchen area to include many functions previously assigned to other areas.

The kitchen design layout evolution accelerated during the 1950s with the introduction of the open-kitchen concept. Although by no means universally accepted, this design became possible and popular for a combination of reasons that include perfection of ventilation that eliminated smoke and cooking odors resulting from cooking combined with increased use of prepared and semi-prepared foods, which resulted in less mess during meal preparation. These innovations were coupled with the centralization of many household functions in the kitchen area – such as the laundry – that resulted in the kitchen becoming the true nexus of household activity. Increasing social informality led to more familial interaction in kitchens, even in upper-income homes. This was particularly true where the architectural style was contemporary rather than traditional.

In both the middle-income and upper-income kitchen, the problem of integrating the refrigerator was addressed in the 1950s with an outpouring of designs that proposed everything from units that mounted to the wall in the place of upper cabinets to side-by-side units to shallow depth units. Illustrations of high-end kitchens of the 1950s show rooms that are barely discernable from their twenty-first century counterparts: rooms that have been described by social historians as fiercely efficient spaces designed to re-establish gender norms.⁵⁸ Social implications aside, it may be said that -- visually -- modern kitchen design was achieved in the 1950s.

A great deal of conversation surrounded the presumably smaller kitchen -- or what appeared to be a smaller kitchen -- beginning in the 1920s. Whether or not the room was smaller, a study of random floor plans from 1922 reveals that, on average, kitchens and pantries together accounted for 12% of the volume of a house. This figure increases to 14.39% when looking only at houses that do not include accommodations for servants. Conversely, when only considering houses that include accommodations for servants, the figure decreases to 8.56% of the overall volume; a reduction that reflects the large amount of public space available rather than implying a kitchen area that is actually small.⁵⁹

Four years later -- in 1926 -- the numbers had indeed shifted downward. Kitchens in houses without servants' accommodations occupied 8.3% of the overall floor space while kitchens in houses with servants' accommodations occupied an average of 6.3% of the space. Again, the lower percentage of space given to kitchens is more of a reflection of the larger house than an implication of physically small kitchen areas, some of which were actually quite large. The shift in the middle-income house figure, however, actually does imply that a smaller amount

⁵⁸ Sandy Isenstadt. 319.

⁵⁹ See Appendix: *Percentage of Interior Volume Given to Kitchens and Associated Areas -- 1922.*

of space was being allotted to the kitchen.⁶⁰ This trend continued in 1930 at which time the figure for houses with servants' accommodations increased only slightly to 6.59% of floor space for the kitchen while the figure for houses without servants' accommodations decreased again to 7.2% of the overall volume of the house.⁶¹

A curious shift occurred in 1934. Houses with accommodations for servants gave, on average, 7% of the overall floor space to the kitchen area, while the houses without servants' accommodations drop further to 5.7% of floor space being used for the kitchen. One reason for this shift was the fact that more houses that would have otherwise appeared to be middle-income housing made accommodations for a maid's room on the plan. Whether or not these were regularly used for that purpose is unknown.⁶²

In 1946, the numbers returned to the pattern that was becoming established prior to 1934, with 5.5% of the overall volume of the house being given to kitchen areas in homes with servants' accommodations and 6.85% in homes without servants' accommodations.⁶³ This marks the end of the compact kitchen as such.

In 1950, the amount of space given to kitchens in homes with servants increased from 5.5% in 1946 to 7.03%. Most remarkably, however, the amount of space given to the kitchen in the middle-income home with no servants' accommodations jumped from 6.85% in 1946 to 12.11% in 1950.⁶⁴ This increase represents an actual increase in size – not just percentage – and is accounted for by the fact that many functions that were formerly assigned to other areas were now being included in the kitchen. Chief among these is frequent inclusion of the washer and

⁶⁰ See Appendix: *Percentage of Interior Volume Given to Kitchens and Associated Areas – 1926.*

⁶¹ See Appendix: *Percentage of Interior Volume Given to Kitchens and Associated Areas – 1930.*

⁶² See Appendix: *Percentage of Interior Volume Given to Kitchens and Associated Areas – 1934.*

⁶³ See Appendix: *Percentage of Interior Volume Given to Kitchens and Associated Areas – 1946.*

⁶⁴ See Appendix: *Percentage of Interior Volume Given to Kitchens and Associated Areas – 1950.*

dryer in the kitchen area proper. Another is the fact that many home designs eliminated a dining room altogether in favor of a larger eat-in area in the kitchen.

In 1955 – the last year studied – the amount of space given to the kitchen in the house with servants' accommodations increased only slightly to 7.87%. The amount of kitchen space in houses without servants' accommodations dropped to 10.16%. It appears that – physically – the square footage for the kitchens in the servant-less houses stayed the same; the houses themselves, however, typically included a den or family room. This increased amount of overall square footage accounts for the 2% drop in space assigned to the kitchen.

What we have seen up to this point consists of abstract statistics and descriptions of generalized spaces that indicate a trend toward perfecting efficiency amidst pleasant surroundings driven by a variety of motives. The kitchen in the first half of the twentieth century may be described as a space that readily absorbed new innovations as quickly as they became affordable. But the rooms, so far, are empty. These rooms were, in fact, centers of activity that were frequently operated with the assistance of servants. It was in the kitchen that black and white women worked together under one roof in a world that was otherwise segregated.

CHAPTER 3

DOMESTIC SERVANTS AND KITCHEN DESIGN

The utilization of servants in the American home is reflected in the construction and design of the houses themselves. Middle-income households tended to use daily help as a necessity prior to the development and broad availability of labor saving devices. Upper-income households used servants both as necessities for the operation of the house and as symbols of affluence and refined living. Throughout the first quarter of the twentieth century, middle-income households with access to servants tended to adopt fewer innovations, or to adopt innovations at a slower pace, than households with no servants. Meanwhile, upper-income house designs continued to include private quarters for servants through the 1950s. The fact that it was becoming increasingly difficult to engage the services of a live-in servant is reflected in the general introduction of comforts – such as private bathrooms and convenient work arrangements – into these areas to serve as enticements to potential employees.⁶⁵

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the use of at least some additional help with the operations of a house was the rule rather than the exception, and in many instances, the demand outstripped the supply. In 1908, for example, the Maine Bureau of Labor recorded ten thousand permanent jobs for domestic employees that had gone unfilled.

Whether or not these jobs were considered desirable often had less to do with wages than might be assumed: they frequently paid as well or better than other available jobs, particularly among the unskilled jobs available to women. The preference for work other than household

⁶⁵ George Joseph Stigler. Domestic Servants in the United States, 1900-1940. New York: National Bureau of Economic Research (1946). 1.

servant work had more to do with the social stigma that was attached to house workers in some regions and with the extremely long workday and lack of a fixed schedule that attended domestic work.⁶⁶ Although a stigma was attached to domestic service – particularly along the eastern seaboard and in the south – in areas such as Missouri, no particular loss of caste was attached to working in domestic service. In fact, working as a domestic between high school and marriage was considered good training for future wives and mothers.⁶⁷

In 1908, domestic servants earned an average of four dollars a week plus room and board, which was more than girls earned as store clerks or factory workers. Still, the number of women (for they were almost invariably women) engaged in domestic work fell on the 1920 census to 1,484,000 after having risen to 1,867,000 in 1910 from 1,509,000 in 1900. This figure increased sharply in 1930 to 2,025,000 and again in 1940 to 2,098,000. The 1930 and 1940 figures are no doubt the result of women having lost jobs in the manufacturing and commercial sectors during the economic depression.⁶⁸

The implications of the numbers themselves, however, can be deceptive. Although the number of servants actually increased by a third between 1900 and 1940, when adjustments are made for the actual number of families seeking domestic servants the ratio of servants to private families fell by 36%.⁶⁹ Statistics also cite the following regarding American households with servants: 1900, 7% of households have servants; 1930s, 5%; and the 1950s, 2.5%. These figures change dramatically, however, when the poorest households are excluded from the total number of households. For example, among those households with the financial ability to afford a servant in 1929, 22% of households with incomes greater than \$3,000 a year had servants, as did

⁶⁶ Stigler. 2.

⁶⁷ Carol K. Coburn. "Learning to Serve: Education and Change in the Lives of Rural Domesticity in the Twentieth Century." *Journal of Social History* 25-1 (Autumn 1991): 109.

⁶⁸ Stigler. 3.

⁶⁹ Stigler. 2.

19% of households with incomes between \$2,000 and \$3,000. In 1930-31, these percentages increased to 20-25%.⁷⁰

Table 3.1: Number of servants by race compared to the total number of women employed.

	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940
White Serv.	66.8%	60.5%	55.6%	45.1%	11%
Black Serv.	33.2%	39.5%	44.4%	54.9%	89%
Employed Whites (all)	65.8%	58.8%	54.2%	52.4%	54.4%
Employed Blacks (all)	34%	41%	45.6%	47.4%	45.3%

The number and use of household servants varied greatly by region across the United States. In 1940, southern households had one servant for every ten families. At the same time, northeastern households had one servant for every fourteen families, and the remainder of the country made do with one servant for every twenty families.⁷¹ The impact of a continuing pool of household servants in the South – particularly after their numbers had begun to decline elsewhere – appears in kitchen and house design where even in more affluent urban areas of the south, modifications that would reflect less dependence on servants are very slow to appear. This is to say, for example, that the reason why one will find evidence of fewer dishwashers in Southern kitchens in the 1950s results less from economic motives than from the fact that they were considered unnecessary with live kitchen help at hand.

⁷⁰ Palmer. 8.

⁷¹ Stigler. 8.

In the south, the large number of women available for work as servants also had an effect on servants' wages. In 1939, for example, the small supply of servants available in the northeast was able to command \$527 a year yet servants in the south averaged \$248 a year: very little more than the national average wage for servants in 1900.⁷² The amount actually earned was also affected by the household income of the employer that caused employee wages in upper-income homes to transcend regional differences to some degree.

Table 3.2: 1939 – Domestic servants' weekly wages by city and household income

	Household income \$2,500 To \$3,000	Household Income \$7,500 \$10,000
Atlanta	\$4.17	\$8.04
Chicago	\$5.13	\$8.83
New York City	\$6.09	\$10.14

Middle-income urban and suburban housing frequently made accommodation for at least one live-in servant prior to 1920. After 1920, however, live-in servants became a rarity in middle-income households for a variety of reasons. The primary motive was the better control a servant had of her own time if she was not on the property during her non-working hours. Interviews from the period reveal that housewives and domestics argued chronically about hours, which created the single worst aspect of living in for a servant.⁷³ The result is seen in the rapid disappearance of live-in accommodations for a servant in middle-income houses from 1920 forward. It is also important to note that domestic work became more racially defined following World War I than it had been at any time previously. Prior to 1920, outside of the south,

⁷² Stigler. 13.

⁷³ Palmer. 69.

domestic service positions had been filled by recent European immigrants as often -- and sometimes more often -- than they had been filled by people of color. The European servants were not spared the “good natured” ridicule that was leveled at servants of color. An early 1920s magazine article, for example, unblushingly chats about a family’s immigrant maid, “Ahna,” and the fact that she has dragged them into a less formal lifestyle. “Ahna” -- by the way -- is a jab at the way the hapless maid, Anna, pronounces her own name in an Eastern European accent.⁷⁴

Second generation Europeans, however, enjoyed an advantage that people of color would never enjoy: they could assimilate and disappear into the white middle class.⁷⁵ Until they did blend in, however, a rigid adherence to the fundamentals of the American class system was acknowledged. This was reflected in house design for middle-income families through the maintenance of backdoor access for servants along with rudimentary toilet facilities expressly for servants use.

Household and kitchen designs from 1920 to 1940, both in plans and existing construction, reveal that the employee in the more affluent household enjoyed advantages in addition to simply earning better wages. Often living-in with room and board being included, this servant enjoyed the same well-heated and well-furnished environment as the employer. Floor plans show that more affluent houses offered private baths for the servants. At the very least, one or two servants would share a bath. Sharing a bath might be viewed skeptically from a twenty-first century perspective, but these same floor plans of actual houses also reveal that, as often as not, two to three bedrooms in the primary residence of a fine home would share a bathroom where in the same home two servants might share one. Affluent homes further

⁷⁴ Catherine Dinker Bowen. “Formality and Our New Home.” *House Beautiful* 52-6 (Dec. 1922): 557.

⁷⁵ Palmer. 67.

accommodated servants with servants' halls or servants' dining rooms located near the kitchen where domestic employees could rest between duties.

Determining how often servants actually got to rest and use these facilities is debatable. A 1930s survey of domestic employees reveals that – among live-in domestics – their employers felt that they were “on-call” (subject to making themselves available) 11 hours and 59 minutes a day while actually “busy” (working) 9 hours and 5 minutes. The employees themselves, however, felt that they were on call 13 hours a day and busy for 12 hours and 12 minutes of those thirteen hours.⁷⁶ It is important to bear in mind that while families with household incomes in excess of \$5,000 a year represented only 2.6% of all families in the United States between 1935 and 1936, these 2.6% of families represent 46% of families employing domestic servants.⁷⁷ It was also noted that the higher the education of the wife, the greater the percentage of likelihood she would have servants.⁷⁸ These numbers should dispel the notion that the number of servants in the United States was in decline at this point; nothing could be further from the truth.

While the number of servants in upper-income households remained fairly constant throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the situation for middle-income families was statistically quite different. The number of American families doubled between 1900 and 1940. Logic dictates, based on previous history, that the ratio of servants to families should have increased in tandem rather than falling by a third as previously noted. But closer inspection shows that middle-income families tended to take more advantage of new labor saving innovations for the home than did their upper-income counterparts. In fact, social historian Mary Drake McFeely asserts that technology was crucial in the transition from hired Irish cook to the

⁷⁶ Stigler. 19.

⁷⁷ Stigler. 30-31.

⁷⁸ Palmer. 10.

middle-class woman alone in her own kitchen.⁷⁹ This led them to use daily help at most and once-a-week help at least. The ability to make do without fulltime additional help in middle class homes was facilitated through utilization of technical innovations that will be discussed in the next chapter. Still, an endless discussion of the “servant problem” in magazines and newspapers, particularly during the 1920s, enforced the idea that being middle-class held the possibility – though remote – of hiring a servant at some point.⁸⁰

In many ways, the middle-class obsession with servants was as much a reflection of social trends as it was with actual necessity. The middle-class housewife of 1920 to 1940 was for the most part maintaining a better built and better organized home than her mother had operated. Among the expected improvements were a smokeless stove, electrical appliances, and a shorter distance between the kitchen and the dining room. Still, as previously mentioned, she may have felt compelled to maintain all of this to a higher standard than her mother had in which case the benefits of technology were offset by the increased standard creating a net effect of zero with respect to the housewife having more leisure time. Some social critics credit the newly emerging field of aggressive advertising for building up the servant problem as justification for making a major purchase. A refrigerator ad of the period begins with the disheartening news that “whether we like to admit it or not, the fact is that we are entering a domestic servant-less age.”⁸¹ Just what the refrigerator has to do with the lack of a servant is never really made clear – but it’s out there.

The women of the generations prior to 1920 had no doubt genuinely required assistance with laborious tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and laundry, But following 1920, and certainly by 1930, most of those tasks had enjoyed some level of alleviation if not elimination through the

⁷⁹ McFeely. 40.

⁸⁰ Lupton. 14.

⁸¹ “Kelvinator Ad.” *House Beautiful* 59-2 (Feb. 1926): 211.

introduction of affordable, mechanical assistance. If one assumes that the argument surrounding the over-emphasis on sanitation is overstated, it might be asserted that the expectation of middle-class women to employ servants at the very least began to perpetuate the devaluation of housework and contribute to the social superiority that middle-class women began to feel toward working-class women.⁸²

Taken to the extreme, feminist poet Doris Davenport has asserted that “white women cling to their myth of being privileged, powerful, and less oppressed than black women because its all they have - - on some level they know they too are powerless and invisible.”⁸³ This would certainly contribute to the decision of whether to invest in newly available labor saving devices or to continue with servants doing the work where they were available. In fact, some sociologists assert that middle-income housewives invested in technology with the hope that at some point the housework would be turned over to a servant anyway.⁸⁴ The centrist position sees a situation where servants were becoming less available to middle-class women. At the same time, hygienic standards were increasingly leaving the middle-class housewife with no one but herself to manage the situation.⁸⁵ In any event, it is safe to say that home was the center of middle class life between the wars, and the kitchen was the center of the home.⁸⁶ And whenever possible, middle class women took advantage of the opportunity to have another hand at the wheel in keeping the house up to the perceived standard. The ideal solution during this period was to make judicious investments in some of the new technology, but to also keep the maid.

Statistical information regarding domestic servants becomes increasingly difficult to obtain for the years following World War II. Evidence of the expected presence of servants can

⁸² Ibid. 14.

⁸³ Palmer. 151.

⁸⁴ Palmer. 3-4.

⁸⁵ Palmer. 149.

⁸⁶ Palmer. 23.

be found on floor plans that include spaces for them. But the public discussion regarding servants or the “servant problem” that was so prevalent during the 1920s and 1930s is largely gone. It is interesting to note that statistical information of domestic servants remained a census category until it was dropped in 1950.⁸⁷ This change did not imply that the population group no longer existed, merely that it was no longer appropriate to recognize it.

⁸⁷ Palmer. 7.

CHAPTER 4
NEW INNOVATIONS: ELECTRICITY, APPLIANCES,
AND PREPARED FOODS

Early use of technical innovations designed for the kitchen was almost exclusively restricted to urban and suburban middle-class homes. Upper income homes utilized advances to a slightly lesser degree in these same settings, in addition to selectively using them at country homes where private electric generators supplied the power. In spite of the expense involved, middle-income households generally justified the expense with the attitude that these investments ultimately paid off in making it possible to run a house with fewer – and in some cases no – servants; an attitude that was strongly promoted in advertising. Advertising also promoted the idea of up-to-date living: an idea to which middle-income families were susceptible. One 1926 cookbook stated that every modern kitchen should be supplied with these aids: a refrigerator, a cooker, a dishwasher, and an electric ventilator.⁸⁸

By comparison, an upper-income homeowner did not consider the effect of new innovations to be important if they were for use in seldom-seen areas of the house and merely served to make life easier in the kitchen. In this instance, utilizing innovations such as electric refrigeration was motivated as a matter of providing better food for the employer than convenience for the kitchen help. The use of an electric range might prevent smoke and odors from drifting into the rest of the house.

⁸⁸ McFeely. 40.

Electrical Service in Urban and Suburban Kitchens

The impact of electricity on the kitchen cannot be overstated, and the advent and utilization of appliances parallels the increase in homes with electrical service available. In 1902, for example, only 8% of American homes had electrical service supplied by a power station. This number had increased to 24.3% in 1918, doubling again to 53.2% only seven years later in 1925. By 1948, 78% of American homes had electrical service and were, therefore, technically capable of taking advantage of any and all electrical devices offered.⁸⁹

Prepared and Prepackaged Foods

Among the innovations most directly affecting the workload of the kitchen was the ever-increasing availability of a wider variety of canned foods not to mention the advent of sliced bread.⁹⁰ Preserving food through canning was a process that had been perfected by Nicholas Appert, a Frenchman, in 1809. The commercial possibilities were recognized by Joseph Campbell, who began his soup empire in 1869 by producing canned tomatoes.⁹¹ The figures reflecting the increased use availability and use of canned goods is staggering.

Table 4.1: Chart of cases of canned goods sold in selected years

	1890	1909	1919	1929	1939
Cases of canned foods per 100 persons	20,557	36,165	61,404	132,805	182,012

⁸⁹ Lupton. 23.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 25.

⁹¹ Cole. 125.

In order to put the impact of the increased availability and use of canned goods in context, one must consider the alternative. Whereas one may open a can of cooked green beans and have them ready to eat and on the table in a matter of minutes, the preparation and cooking of fresh green beans takes about an hour not including the fact that fresh vegetables cannot be kept on hand indefinitely and must be purchased every several days. Multiply this by a broad variety of vegetables and the impact of canned goods on hours spent in the kitchen becomes apparent. In addition to the already familiar Campbell's Soup, boxed foods such as Kraft Macaroni and Cheese entered the kitchen as a storable food product in 1937. This followed Kraft's successful introduction of the storable spread Miracle Whip in 1935 and the canned meat and storable meat product Spam was introduced.⁹²

As with other advances, the increased availability and use of canned and packaged foods largely affected middle-income houses as cooks in upper-income houses were expected to produce the best tasting food from the freshest ingredients available. In middle-income houses, both new and remodeled kitchens reflected the increased use of prepared and storable foods in the drive toward increased storage that included larger expanses of built-in cabinets. Compared to upper-income households, the goal for middle-income kitchens was less about prep work and more about finishing: less about long-term production with the true goal being consistent results.⁹³

The movement toward preserved semi-prepared foods took a large step with the introduction of frozen foods. Perfected by Clarence Birdseye in 1923, the method for freezing fruits and vegetables and capturing their fresh flavor was purchased by Postum in 1929.⁹⁴

⁹² Gdula. 57.

⁹³ McFeely. 42.

⁹⁴ Cole. 133.

Although widely recognized as a quality product by the public, the problem with frozen foods was initially one of home storage.

Refrigeration

Accommodations for frozen foods were problematic: the freezer compartments in domestic refrigerators of the time were relatively small and did not permit storage for more than several packages of frozen food, and these at the expense of the several ice-trays stored in the freezer. The post-war 1940s, however, made a strong design drive toward the inclusion of larger freezers if not separate freezer units. Coupled with strong advertising campaigns, the home freezer came to be viewed as a necessity by the 1950s. Kitchen designs from the mid-twentieth century regularly include them arranged side-by-side with refrigerators and an ever increasing variety of products were made available to fill them such as Swanson's frozen chicken potpies, which became available in 1951.⁹⁵

The movement away from refrigerators requiring blocks of ice toward electric refrigeration occurred slowly throughout the 1920s. The sheer expense of electric refrigeration was the initial deterrent. The motive for making the transition, however, was closely aligned with continued emphasis on sanitation and easier housekeeping. Iceboxes (called "refrigerators" in magazine advertisements) were not particularly effective in preserving foods. They also dripped water onto the floor, required a thorough weekly cleaning, and necessitated a trip through the kitchen by the iceman every two to three days.

Proper accommodation for the icebox was a strong topic in design magazines during the 1920s. The ideal solution was to place them on the enclosed kitchen porch facing an outside wall where the iceman could load the ice without entering the house (**Figure 4.1**). Other design

⁹⁵ Cole. 135.

considerations included facing the outside exteriors to the north so the ice-loading door could be left open in winter: by using the cold winter air, one could economize on ice purchases. Even though iceboxes remained in strong competition with mechanical refrigeration throughout the 1920s, an electric refrigerator was acknowledged as a key component of a “modern” kitchen.⁹⁶

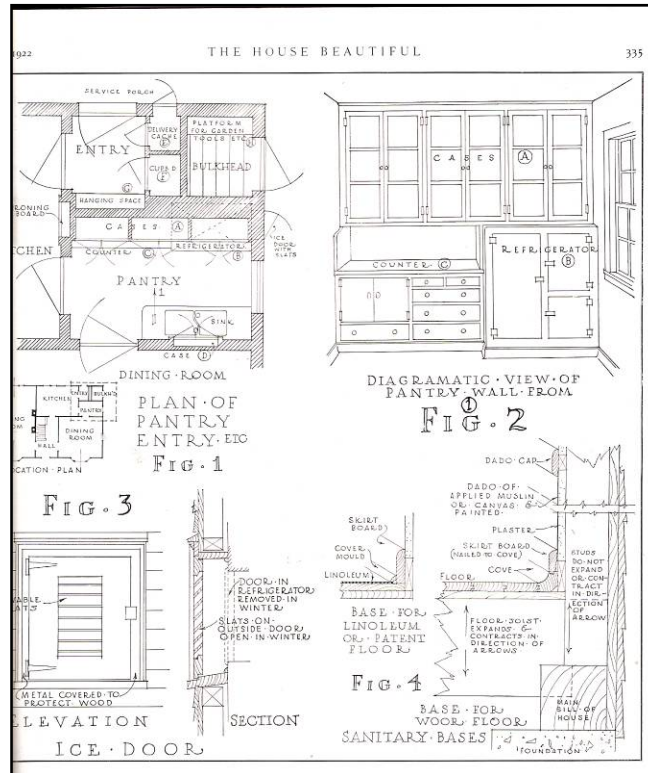


Figure 4.1: Plan for placing icebox including exterior ice loading (House Beautiful – April 1922 – p.335)

By the late 1920s, several manufacturers were advertising the advantages of electric refrigeration. Chief among these was *Frigidaire*, which introduced the first self-contained electric refrigerator in 1923.⁹⁷ Kelvinator produced an electrical device that could be inserted into the ice compartment of an icebox thereby creating an electric refrigerator. The very word

⁹⁶ Sandy Isenstadt. “Visions of Plenty: Refrigerators in America around 1950.” *Journal of Design History* 11-4 (1998): 312.

⁹⁷ Cole. 215.

“refrigerator” was used in advertising with several meanings including an icebox, an electric refrigerator, or merely the cabinet. In fact, magazine advertising from the late 1920s includes several companies who produced refrigerator cabinets: the electric mechanisms to be purchased from another source. Therefore, by the end of the 1920s, electric refrigerator sales in one form or another had moved up from ten thousand units sold in 1920 to 800,000 units in 1929.⁹⁸ It was at this point that electric refrigeration overtook iceboxes.

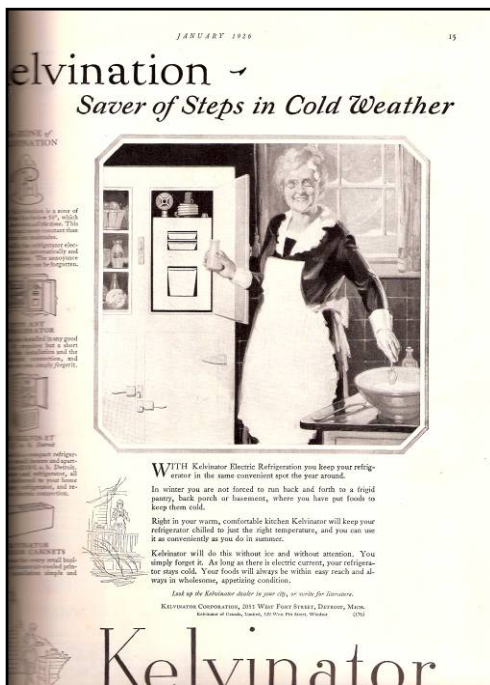


Figure 4.2: 1922 model following the lines of an icebox (House Beautiful – July 1922- p. 55).

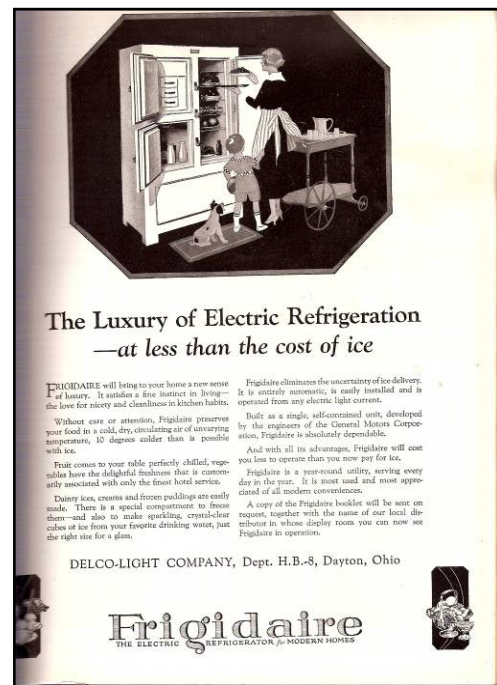


Figure 4.3: 1926 advertisement for electrifying the icebox (House Beautiful – Jan. 1926 – p. 15)

⁹⁸ Cole 133.

General Electric, which had developed an early electric refrigerator with the compressor in the cellar in 1911, introduced the then revolutionary “monitor top” refrigerator around the beginning of the economic depression in 1929.⁹⁹ The removal of the motor from below the cabinet to the top of the unit allowed the refrigerator to be positioned on legs in order to facilitate cleaning the floor beneath. As such, the design was complimentary to stoves that still appeared on legs. As the 1930s progressed, however, the ideal of a uniform kitchen appearance began to take hold: a precursor of the integrated kitchen that would come after the war. Appliances on legs did not compliment a uniform appearance, and both the stoves and the refrigerators began to lose their legs and finished surfaces moved all the way to the floor.



Figure 4.4: Introduction of Monitor Top (House Beautiful – Sept 1930 – p. 204)

⁹⁹ Cole, 215.

In spite of the economic depression of the 1930s, mechanical (electric and sometimes gas) refrigerators had replaced iceboxes in 64% of American homes by 1940.¹⁰⁰ As expected, the unit cost for mechanical refrigerators had steadily dropped as the result of mass production. The cumbersome domestic unit of 1916 with its mechanics located in the cellar had cost around \$900, which greatly restricted its availability. The sleek, efficient and self-contained unit of 1940 was less than half that cost. The design developments more or less followed the evolution of the stove. Initially produced in the 1910s with the same bulky design as iceboxes, the 1920s favored refrigerators on legs (for ease of cleaning beneath) eventually giving way to designs that went to the floor in 1940. Even so, these failed to conform to the emerging continuous-kitchen design that was the ideal of the time.¹⁰¹

Post World War II developments in refrigeration explored the possibilities of every conceivable configuration including: under the cabinet; under the counter; side by side; freezer on top and refrigerator on the bottom; refrigerator on top and freezer on the bottom; in addition to expanding the variety of finishes to include both colors and metallic finishes.

The continued movement toward visually integrated kitchens led to experiments with “hiding” the refrigerator in the kitchen cabinet system. It has been noted that by the mid-1950s, the kitchen had become a concentration of social values, cheap energy and hidden appliances; virtually everything had become subdued except the refrigerator.¹⁰² This culminated in the 1950s with the observation that American refrigerators were the largest in the world, and 99.5% of American homes had one. Electric refrigeration was credited with having changed the way

¹⁰⁰ Lupton. 60.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Sandy Isenstadt. “Visions of Plenty: Refrigerators in America around 1950.” *Journal of Design History* 11-4 (1998): 311.

Americans shopped for groceries, cooked, and ate.¹⁰³ In addition to its practical function, the 1950s refrigerator was a device to display the abundance Americans were coming to see as a birthright.¹⁰⁴ American refrigerators were, in fact, growing in capacity as the American household diminished in size.¹⁰⁵

Additional products became available to push refrigerated food storage to its limits.

These included the invention of *Tupperware* by Earl Tupper in 1946 and *Saran Wrap* in 1953.¹⁰⁶



Figure 4.5: Integrated refrigeration (House Beautiful – March 1955 – p. 11)



Figure 4.6: Side-by-side refrigeration (House Beautiful – May 1955 – IFC).

¹⁰³ Cole. 218.

¹⁰⁴ Sandy Isenstadt. 317.

¹⁰⁵ Sandy Isenstadt. 318-19.

¹⁰⁶ Cole. 128-29.



Figure 4.7: Cabinet refrigeration
(House Beautiful – April 1955 – p. 12-13)

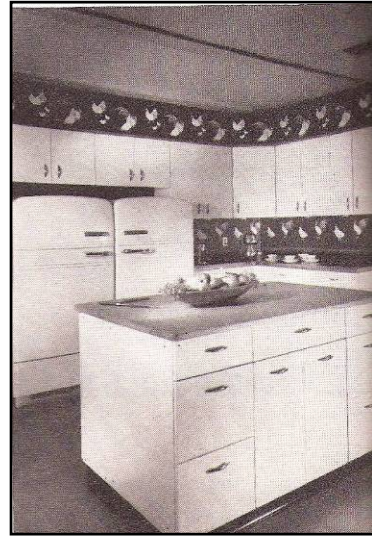


Figure 4.8: Double unit refrigeration
(House Beautiful – Apr 1950 – p. 136)

Cabinetry

The design of manufactured kitchen storage cabinets that had begun before 1900 had developed into a fairly standardized piece of kitchen furniture by the 1920s. Most often the only storage available in the kitchen proper, these cabinets had evolved to handle the storage of bulky quantities of flour and sugar, along with supplying specialized spaces for all of the utensils and smaller items necessary to cooking. They frequently sported enameled metal pullout surfaces that served well as pastry preparation areas. When closed, the cabinets present a pristine and efficient appearance that reflected the sensibilities of the times. As the 1920s progressed, manufacturers began offer variations and components that could combine to fit a myriad number of kitchen configurations. The ability to combine the pieces effectively called for standardization. The magic number “36” initially appeared as the recommended height for wall mounted kitchen sinks in the 1920s. Both manufacturers of cabinet systems and stoves subsequently adopted this figure in order to keep a level appearance between stovetops and

countertops. Standardized height is, of course, very economical for builders and manufacturers but impractical for anyone who does not conform to the “average” height: a situation that would be revisited in the 1950s.¹⁰⁷



Figure 4.9: Introduction of 36” as the standard height
(House Beautiful – April 1922 – p. 356)



Figure 4.10: Typical kitchen cabinet of the 1920s
(House Beautiful – June 1922 – p. 522)

¹⁰⁷ Lupton. 41.

A problem that emerged with the movement toward a perimeter of enclosed base cabinets was that the flush doors on the lower cabinets left no space where one could comfortably sit down and work at the counter creating a situation where all work had to be performed standing up.¹⁰⁸ Another criticism leveled at the integrated cabinet design was that concealing all tools and supplies behind opaque doors wasted time and energy. This complaint has not borne the test of time, as the addition of doors was actually a response to the earlier complaint against the period when open shelves were in use: namely, that tools and supplies that are *not* stored in drawers and behind doors require constant cleaning from the grease that is generated in the kitchen.

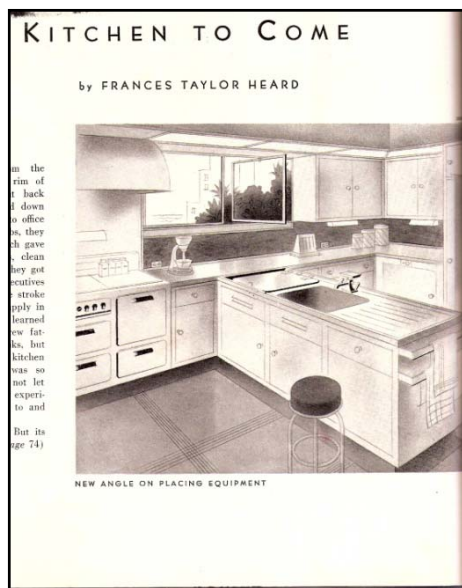


Figure 4.11: Early proposal of a peninsula
(House Beautiful – Nov 1934 – p. 34)



Figure 4.12: Early kitchen island
(House Beautiful – Apr 1950 – p. 137)

¹⁰⁸ Lupton, 41.

Although the vast majority of the emerging cabinetwork for middle-income kitchens revolved around arrangements on the perimeter walls, some experimentation was done. The idea of a peninsula protruding from the main counter was suggested in the 1930s, and kitchen islands appeared as early as 1950.

Post World War II saw an increasing interest in incorporating pass-through designs in the cabinetwork whereby the surface that served as a countertop on the kitchen side became the serving surface on the dining side. In middle-income houses, this was accomplished by simply removing the wall between the upper and lower cabinets and extending the 24-inch deep counter surface to 36 inches, providing an overhang on the dining side. In more expensive homes, steps were taken to provide a blind between the two areas during meal times. These ranged from the installation of hinged blinds to the use of elaborate screens that could be raised and lowered to camouflage the opening.

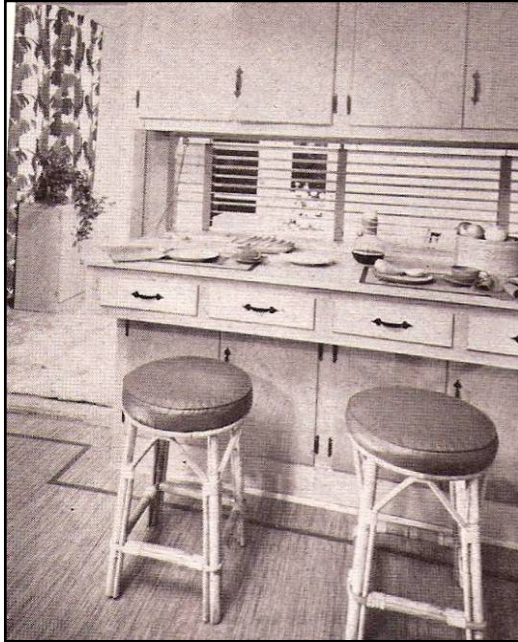


Figure 4.13: A very simple pass through
(House Beautiful – Nov. 1950 – p. 92)

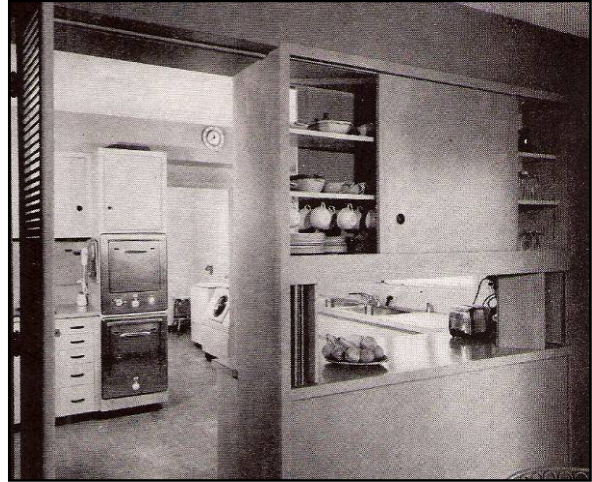


Figure 4.14: Pass through with folding blind
(House Beautiful – March 1955 – p. 109)

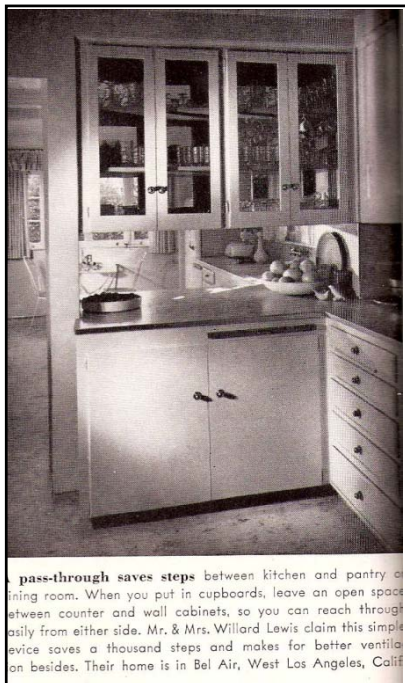


Figure 4.15: Combination pass through and breakfast bar with louvered blind
(House Beautiful – March 1950 – p. 92)



Figure 4.16: Elaborate pass through with gilded screen that rises for service to dining room
(House Beautiful– Feb. 1955 – p. 101)

In the general scheme of things, manufactured steel cabinets were considered preferable to site-built cabinets for middle-income residences when the movement toward fully integrated cabinets first took hold in the 1930s. Finished with enamel paint, almost invariably in white, these cabinets tended to reflect the finish on the nearby stove and refrigerator thereby contributing to the unified appearance of the kitchen. Ever mindful of cleanliness, these were also considered to be easier to wash and less inviting to insect or rodent infestation than wood cabinets. In any case, they were usually both superior to and more affordable than cabinets constructed by carpenters on site.

Conversely, where cabinetry was used in upper-income kitchens, the preference was for high-end manufactured cabinetry in wood. Several name brands stood out. Among them was Curtis, a company that had previously been known for its fine milled moldings and woodwork for built-in bookcases and cabinets. Some brands of metal cabinet, however, were acceptable and sometimes found in higher-end homes. St. Charles produced a superior metal cabinet system with a variety of options including specialized ventilated cabinets for fresh vegetables, slotted cabinets for easy storage of baking utensils, and drawers fitted for receiving silverware.

Metal cabinets continued in popularity for middle-income homes throughout the 1940s, particularly in spec house subdivisions. Prone to rusting, however, few of these cabinet systems survived. The higher-end St. Charles and Curtis, however, may be found still in service.



Figure 4.17: High-end metal cabinets by St. Charles
(House Beautiful – April 1946 – p. 120)



Figure 4.18: High-end custom wood cabinets by Curtis
(House Beautiful – May 1950 – p. 105)

Manufacturers of cabinets for the middle-income market also found a lucrative product with the development of dinette sets. Designed to compliment the materials of the built-in cabinets, these sets enjoyed great popularity due to the ability to fully coordinate the popular eat-in areas with the rest of the kitchen. These dinette sets continued to be produced throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, though they are most associated with the 1940s. These sets, in chrome and Formica with coordinated chrome chair frames and vinyl upholstery, were appreciated for their easy-to-clean features and perfect coordination with the cabinet systems.

Dishwashers

Dishwashers had been offered as early as the 1890s with the first dishwashing patent having been granted to John Alexander in 1865.¹⁰⁹ A dishwasher created by Josephine Cochrane in 1886 that was designed to reduce breakage resulting from hand washing found a strong commercial market but had little application for residential use due to its sheer bulk.¹¹⁰ Domestic dishwashers never made a big hit until the advances made on the electric motor in the 1920s allowed them to be used with this particular product. Even so, continued complaints about them continued, and chief among these was the fact that the dishwashers themselves required nearly as much cleaning as it would have taken to wash dishes by hand. In the 1920s, their largest selling point was the ongoing sanitation issue: dishwashers could wash dishes with water heated to a higher temperature than a human being could handle.¹¹¹ Beyond this, there was not too much to be said in favor of a dishwasher. Bulky, space consuming and awkward, models were advertised in the 1920s that ranged from tabletop units to roll around units that could be pushed into the dining room (for loading dirty dishes directly into the machine) before being rolled back to the kitchen where they would be attached to power and water for operation. Still they were mostly seen as an impractical novelty.

¹⁰⁹ Cole. 99.

¹¹⁰ Cole. 99-100.

¹¹¹ Ethel R. Peyser. "Points about the New Dishwashers." *House Beautiful* 51-1 (Jan. 1922): 53.

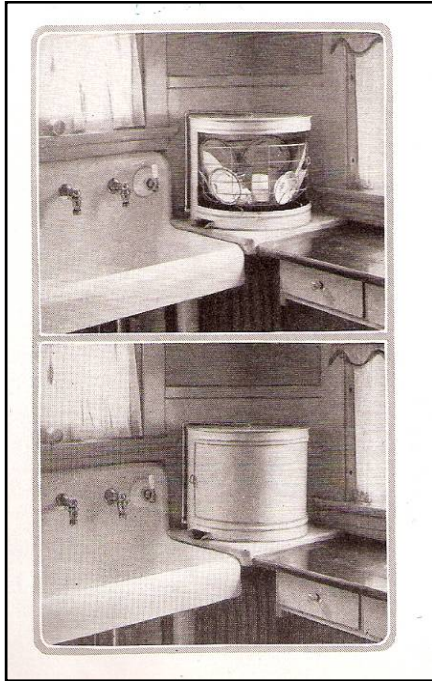


Figure 4.19: Tabletop dishwasher
(House Beautiful – Jan. 1922 – p. 53)



Figure 4.20: Rolling dishwasher
(House Beautiful – Jan. 1922 – p. 53)

Although stalled by the depression, dishwashers reached a level of refinement during the 1930s that made them popular once post-war mass production brought the prices down. They were, in fact, considered a major selling point in the massive tract housing developments designed for the middle class in the 1940s and 1950s: as a built-in appliance, the cost of a dishwasher could be rolled into the mortgage. Again, acceptance and use was slower in upper-income homes, but they became more widely used in the postwar era, albeit for different reasons than in less affluent houses. The ever-increasing difficulty of securing domestic help after the war, for example, made the availability of an up-to-date kitchen a major incentive to be offered to a potential employee in a wealthy home. Electric dishwashers were among these incentives in the 1940s and 1950s.

Stoves

The very fact that stoves could be operated by electricity or gas as opposed to combustion fuels made these among the most readily accepted appliances. Innovations were largely matters of design. One true innovation was the availability of a timed on-off feature in the mid-1920s.¹¹² Beyond this, stoves were styled on legs for the most part during the 1920s, a design the ultimately gave way to stoves that were finished all the way to the floor in the 1930s. As kitchen base cabinets began to be standardized, stoves followed suit at the same 24-inch depths and 36-inch heights in order to integrate into the emerging continuous kitchen designs that began in the 1930s. Exceptions to this include extremely high-end ranges that were designed for use in upper-income kitchens where integrated cabinetry was lagging behind during the 1930s.

Post-World War II stoves destined for middle-income kitchens remained mostly white porcelain, four burner units with one – and occasionally two – ovens below. This began to give way to colors and metallic finishes such as copper or stainless steel toward the end of the 1940s. At this same time, the stove began to be offered as a separate unit. Drop-in cook-tops allowed ovens to be mounted at more comfortable heights in the cabinets: an idea that found great favor.

The primary changes in stoves for the upper income market, which had begun to take a greater interest in the kitchen by this time, was larger (wider) stoves with six and eight burners over two and sometimes three ovens.

¹¹² “Armstrong Electric Range (advertisement).” *House Beautiful* 59-5 (Nov. 1926): 649.

APRIL 1926



WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE KITCHEN?

GOONS is the last relic of old-fashionedness. Smartness and refinement have made their final conquest. In place of the clumsy, sprawling cabinet range comes now the Smoothtop Gas Range. Its oven is no longer a box tumbled on one end, its legs are no longer gawky and sprawling. Smoothtop has the lines of a console. Its top is flat, like a table. Its burners are enclosed. The one kitchen element which everyone considered hopeless suddenly emerges compact, smart, modern... Architects and decorators are now attacking the kitchen with new enthusiasm. Smoothing, they find, gives the cooking area of a cabinet range and saves unneeded floor space. It cuts off all light, and carries on room light. So, they're developing new-type kitchens, curvily of convenience and space-saving... 6 of these burners are enclosed. The one kitchen element which everyone considered hopeless suddenly emerges compact, smart, modern... You like to study it?

An Entirely New Cookery Better—Easier

In revolutionary cookery, smooth-top Smoothtop Gas Range. Seven steps, per range, on one fire, save every conceivable variety of cooking. It starts all these processes around oven and stovetop. Extra small fry box all done in one. All this with the best of washing, no fat, no cleaning.

Super Vulcan Burner

The Smoothtop cookery has really been created by the Super Vulcan Burner. Now the burner does everything the gas does better. Yes, no more gas is consumed.

4 Cooking Zones

Each burner has 4 distinct cooking zones. Boiling, Simmering, Warming, and Steaming, saving the gas and you with a guaranteed hot-plate. It's wonderful.

Oven

Heat Regulation 75% of all cooking is done on oven. The Smoothtop oven is complete, even to the roof, with built-in shelves, oven heat regulation.

"How to Handle Your Old Kitchen"

Consider the old kitchen as a nuisance. It is a nuisance because it is a nuisance. It is a nuisance because it is a nuisance. It is a nuisance because it is a nuisance.

"Smoothtop Cookery"

Learn to handle your old kitchen. It is a nuisance because it is a nuisance. It is a nuisance because it is a nuisance. It is a nuisance because it is a nuisance.

Smoothtop GAS RANGE WITH SUPER VULCAN BURNERS

Figure 4.21: Typical stove and arrangement for 1920s middle-income kitchen (House Beautiful – April 1926 – p. 417)



YOUR KITCHEN—YOUR RANGE

Your kitchen should be one of the most attractive rooms in your home. The modern woman demands beauty as well as efficiency in her kitchen and its appointments.

LIKE a ray of sunshine the Perfect Porcelain Enamelled Range brightens the kitchen and lightens the work, thus adding to the enjoyment of life.

The Perfect Porcelain Enamelled Range embodies everything that is to be desired in a range—convenience, safety, easy-to-clean surface and a gas water heater if you desire it. Finished in brilliant enamel of gray and blue to harmonize with the color scheme of your kitchen; these enamel—because of a special process—will not crack or chip and can be cleaned with just a damp cloth.

If you are contemplating building, or altering your present home, it will be our pleasure to place at your disposal the services of any of our departments. These services are, of course, also available to purchasers and decorators.

RICHARDSON & BOYNTON CO.

120 Fifth Avenue, New York City 600 West Street, Boston 1221 North Street, Philadelphia 420 Industrial Union Bldg., Providence 175 W. Lake Street, Chicago

Figure 4.22: Typical range and arrangement for 1920s upper income kitchen (House Beautiful – April 1922 – p. 360)

The dream kitchen of every Bride



General Electric has made the "dream kitchen" of every bride come true... a gay, colorful kitchen where she is proud to entertain friends informally, or invite her guests for an inspection tour. Here all kitchen drudgery is banished.

In this new age of electrical living the busy removal of yesterday's "workshop of the home" is unknown. The G-E Kitchen is a marvel of modern beauty, cleanliness, and efficiency that releases maid or mistress from hours of kitchen routine each day.

Here electricity performs the tasks... human hands only "direct" magic electric servants "do." A G-E refrigerator provides the ice, makes dairy cream delicious and safely preserves the perishable foods. The G-E dishwasher washes and dries all dishes sparkling clean, without chipping or breakage of the finest china or glassware. The automatic General Electric range simplifies cooking, eliminates baking failures, and gives foods that delicious flavor only possible with electric cookery.

A complete General Electric Kitchen can be had on the G-E Step-by-Step Plan, one unit at a time... or as a complete installation including lighting, cabinets and decorating. G-E Kitchens are not "woodwork"... each is planned and designed for the individual home.

See your nearest General Electric dealer

GENERAL ELECTRIC Kitchen

Figure 4.23: Typical stove and arrangement for 1930s middle-income kitchen (House Beautiful – May 1934 – p. 108)

Triple the efficiency of your kitchen with 3 HOTPOINT WORK CENTERS



1 Cooking Center. For one Hotpoint Kitchen Electric Range should be installed conveniently near refrigerator and sink. Lighted Hotpoint Hot Cabinet provides storage space for cooking utensils.

2 Dishwashing Center. To save space, this should be located between the other two centers. Hotpoint Electric Dishwasher with automatic dishwasher rack and built-in water heater. Hotpoint Electric Dishwasher provides a washed, ready-to-use, hot water supply. See also the Hotpoint Electric Dishwasher for more information.

3 Food Storage and Mixing Center. Cut your unnecessary trips by placing your new Hotpoint Electric Refrigerator on the side nearest the door through which you usually enter. Hot plan for mixing center is adjusted in refrigerator. See also the Hotpoint Electric Dishwasher for more information.

Hotpoint Work Centers—what we call the most efficient of planning appliances so they can be used with the utmost efficiency. You'll find this principle explained in a helpful, 24-page book "Hotpoint Work Centers." You'll find expert advice from Hotpoint engineers, architects and home maintenance, and full-color illustrations of an ideal kitchen.

Send the coupon in today—with no cent—for your copy of "Hotpoint Work Centers by Hotpoint." Learn how to get the most out of the Hotpoint appliances you need for so long!

Hotpoint Electric Kitchens
DEPENDABILITY ASSURED BY 40 YEARS EXPERIENCE

Figure 4.24: Typical stove and arrangement for post-war 1940s middle-income kitchen (House Beautiful – May 1946 – p. 39)

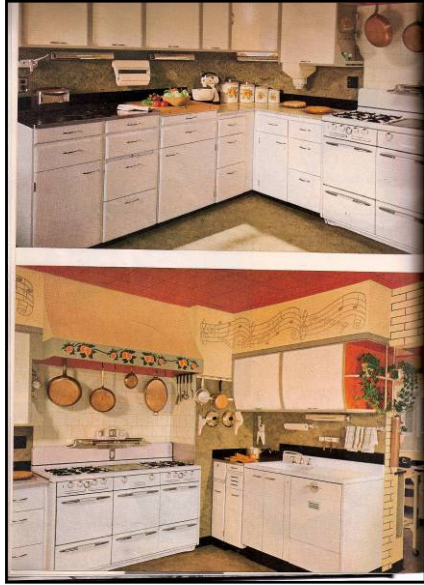


Figure 4.25: Typical stoves and arrangements for postwar 1940s upper-income kitchens (House Beautiful – Feb. 1950 – p. 83)



Figure 4.26: Extremely high-end 1950s kitchen (House Beautiful – Jan. 1955 – p. 45)



Figure 4.27: Cutting edge 1950s kitchen with bleached wood cabinets, tile floor, built-in stainless appliances and camouflaged pass through to dining room. Only the style of the refrigerator suggests the date (House Beautiful – May 1955 – p. 174)

Smaller Appliances

The use of appliances was not restricted to the large refrigerators and stoves. Many heretofore-manual tasks began to be supplanted or at least assisted through the intervention of small appliances. Small electric appliances for the kitchen were first shown at the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1892. By 1913, *General Electric* was producing toasters, irons, and electric ranges--although sales were hampered by the then limited availability of electrical service.¹¹³ With the broadening availability and use of electricity in suburban and urban homes, greater use was made of small appliances that had become practical by the 1920s.¹¹⁴

Among the most familiar small appliances stand the electric mixer, the electric toaster, and the electric percolator. It is difficult to imagine the freedom brought about by these seemingly innocuous devices until one considers that toasting bread in an oven or on top of a stove did not permit the cook to leave the stove until the toast was finished without having a great possibility of charring the bread

Coffee made directly on the top of the stove must be interrupted following a period of percolation or the coffee becomes bitter. With the use of electric toasters and percolators, both of these functions could be set to task and then left while other work was performed. They also introduced the element of portability. Toast and coffee could be made fresh and served directly in the dining room without having to run back and forth to the kitchen.

The electric mixer speaks for itself. A bowl of cream could be set to whip quickly with an expectation of consistency that a bowl and whisk cannot provide. Small appliances were, in their day, extremely liberating miracles. In many ways, these smaller appliances filled in the gap for conveniences formerly handled by servants. Some historians have attributed the heightened

¹¹³ Lupton. 23.

¹¹⁴ Cole. 161.

awareness and dialogue surrounding the “servant problem” in the 1920s to the drive to create labor-saving devices to relieve the housewife of burdens created by a lack of help: the theory being that advertisers created the servant problem and then offered the solution.¹¹⁵ Advertisers may well have done this, but the fact remains that many of these small appliances, such as automatic coffee makers, mixers, and toasters, are still relied upon today. The implication being: small appliances perform useful work.

Mixers led to appliances that did not necessarily replace manual methods as much as create an entirely new type of appliance. Hamilton-Beach introduced its first electric mixer in 1910, which was followed by the Kitchenaid mixer in 1920. By 1932, Oster introduced the Osterizer, which replaced nothing in particular but rather made possible an entirely new range of drinks and foods.¹¹⁶ The new appliance was so successful, even during the economic depression, that a competitor introduced the Waring Blender four years later in 1936.¹¹⁷

Kitchen cleanup was made easier when General Electric introduced the garbage disposal in 1935. Called the “kitchen pig,” the disposal proved to be a great assistance in kitchen sanitation by allowing food scraps to be washed down the drain: an event made possible through a combination of the universal presence of municipal sewer systems in urban areas coupled with equally universal electrical service in urban areas.¹¹⁸

Another of the kitchen’s electrical outlets was occupied by the plug for the radio, for radio became a favorite companion to homemakers in the kitchen in the 1930s.¹¹⁹ Advertisers loved this innovation and took full advantage of having “Mrs. Homemaker’s ear.” Many popular

¹¹⁵ Lupton. 15.

¹¹⁶ Cole. 169.

¹¹⁷ Gdula. 55.

¹¹⁸ Gdula.

¹¹⁹ Gdula. 61.

radio programs of the time targeted the homemaker and were sponsored by products she would use in the very kitchen where she might be working while listening.¹²⁰

In spite of the array of appliances – both large and small – that were placed in service in the kitchen, the average new middle-income kitchen was seldom fitted with more than two, two-gang electrical outlets: one of which was taken over by the refrigerator. This situation was different in new construction for upper-income homes where electrical outlets in the kitchen were more regularly and liberally arranged. This is a reflection of the fact that most middle-income houses were designed by agreement between the builder who constructed them and the male homeowner: it is doubtful whether either of these gave a great deal of attention to the array of new electrical appliances that were used in the kitchen. Upper income house design was left in the hands of architects who were informed on the latest trends and state-of-the-art mechanical systems, which – coupled with a larger budget – would account for the greater number of original electrical outlets found in these kitchens.

As previously stated, some historians believe that the typical middle-income housewife from the early 1920s through at least the 1950s saw herself as a semi-professional home manager with an ever-increasing sphere of influence over purchasing decisions regarding a consistently widening array of products. Other feminist historians have asserted that women of the period were merely being seduced, duped, misled, and generally coerced into buying unnecessary products.¹²¹ A study of extant kitchens may not conclusively prove the motives or manipulations behind the purchases, but they can certainly reveal which technologies were actually invested in as opposed to those merely seen in the ideal kitchens pictured in advertisements.

¹²⁰ McFeely. 46.

¹²¹ Palmer. 19.

Flooring

Although not an innovation, a word must be said about flooring: and that word is “linoleum.” Throughout the period under study this material was the material of choice with little variation between middle- or upper-income residences. All linoleum is not created equal, however, and various grades of the material existed. The primary differences between high and low quality linoleum had to do with the thickness of the material and the depth of the pattern penetration into the material. This floor covering endured unchallenged as the favorite flooring for kitchens from the 1900s until the late 1940s when vinyl, asphalt and cork coverings began to compete for the kitchen floor market. Therefore, a discussion about floor coverings between 1900 and 1940 will have less to do with the primary material than with colors and patterns that were favored at different points.

When first introduced, the largest complaint about linoleum came from aesthetes whose sensibilities were offended at one material imitating another. This was in response to the fact that the initial patterns for linoleum imitated inlaid tile or marble.¹²² Aesthetics aside, the material found great favor among consumers. In a survey in 1927, 83% of respondents had linoleum floors in their kitchens and, more importantly, they would certainly replace these with more linoleum when the time came to redo the kitchen floor.¹²³

Linoleum floors have suffered at the hands of historic preservationists who have viewed linoleum as something to rip out in order to get to the real floor when the linoleum usually was the “real” floor.¹²⁴ Reviewing advertisements can reveal popular colors and patterns for flooring at various periods.

¹²² Pamela H. Simpson. “Comfortable, Durable, and Decorative: Linoleum’s Rise and Fall from Grace.” *APT Bulletin* 30-2-3 (1999): 22.

¹²³ Simpson. 22.

¹²⁴ Simpson. 22.

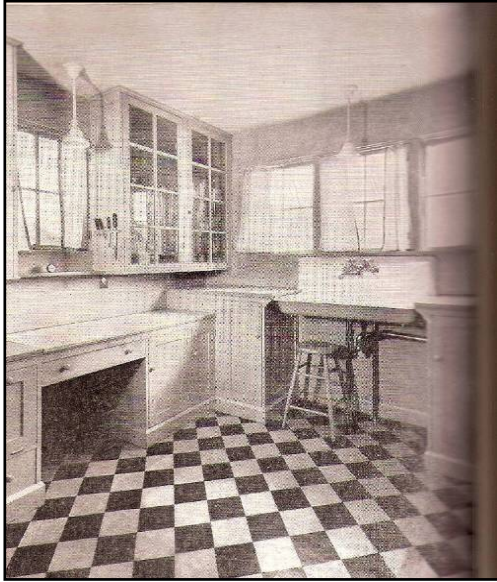


Figure 4.28: Checkerboard on the diagonal in the 1920s
(House Beautiful – Nov. 1922 – p. 422)



Figure 4.29: Another example of checkerboard on the diagonal
(House Beautiful – Apr. 1926 – p. 424)



Figure 4.30: A 1920s marbled finish linoleum laid on the square
(House Beautiful – June 1926 – p. 760)

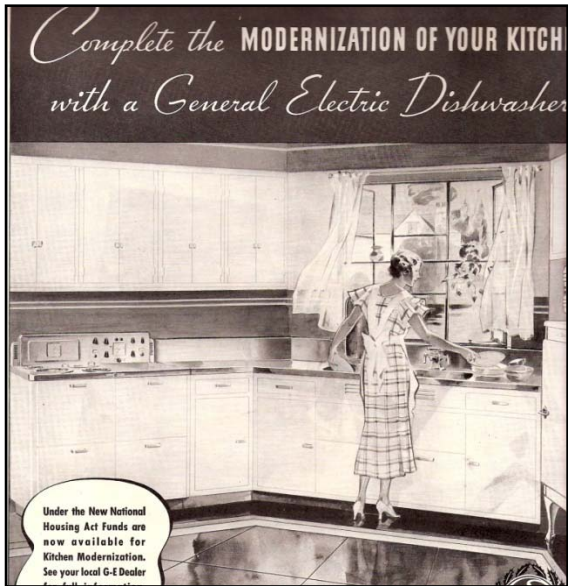


Figure 4.31: 1930s floor with border
(House Beautiful – Nov. 1934 – p. 18)



Figure 4.32: 1930s inlaid linoleum pattern
(House Beautiful – Nov. 1934 – p. 34)



Figure 4.33: Unidentified material in a 1940s kitchen – strong use of color on continuous flooring
(House Beautiful – Sept. 1946 – p. 155)

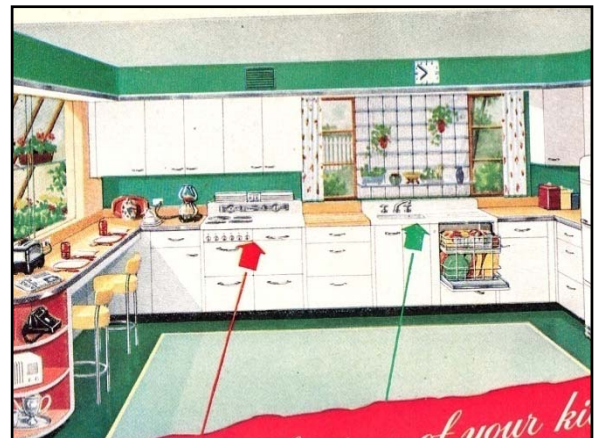


Figure 4.34: Unidentified material – two tone continuous flooring with inlaid border
(House Beautiful – April 1946 – p. 39)



Figure 4.35: 1940s linoleum floor with inlaid border. Note: countertops are also linoleum (House Beautiful – April 1946 – p. 120)

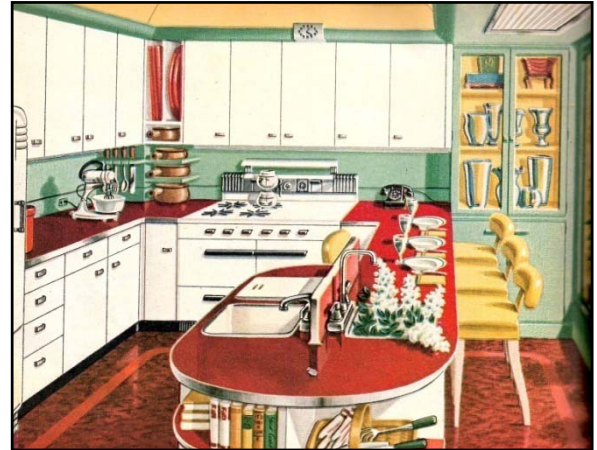


Figure 4.36: 1940s continuous flooring with inlaid border (House Beautiful – May 1946 – p. 162)



Figure 4.37: 1940s – Beginning of flooring alternatives – an inlaid floor of asphalt tile (House Beautiful – Dec. 1946 – p. 107)



Figure 4.38: 1940s flooring alternatives: a pegged wood plank floor to compliment the “Colonial” aspects of this kitchen (House Beautiful – Dec. 1946 – p. 251)



Figure 4.39: The textbook definition of a 1950s middle-income dream kitchen: all white appliances, a green theme and yellow accents. Clean, efficient, and homey with all current appliances. Floor is a green marbled asphalt tile with no borders
(House Beautiful– Sept. 1950 – p. 101)



Figure 4.40: High-end 1950s kitchen with vinyl tile in a wood parquet pattern
(House Beautiful – April 1950 – p. 137)



Figure 4.41: 1950s high-end kitchen - Asphalt tile with darker perimeter border
(House Beautiful – May 1950 – p. 105)



Figure 4.42: 1950s – High-end kitchen with marbled asphalt tile floor
(House Beautiful – Oct. 1950 – p. 169)



Figure 4.43: 1950s advertisement for linoleum flooring. Note: bordered pattern is now becoming dated and more often associated with 1940s design (House Beautiful – May 1950 – p. 71)

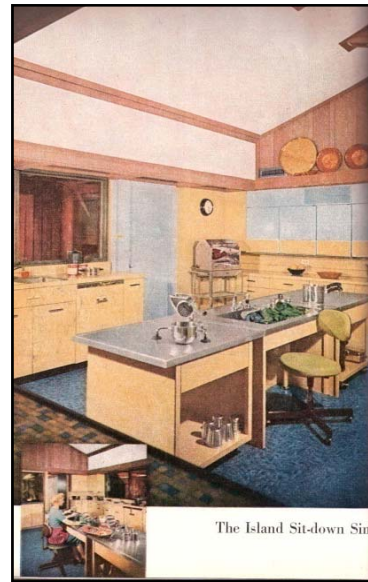


Figure 4.44: High-end 1950s kitchen with marbled asphalt tile and no borders (House Beautiful– Feb. 1955 – p. 104)



Figure 4.45: High-end 1950s kitchen with marbled asphalt tile and no borders (House Beautiful – Feb. 1955 – p. 154)



Figure 4.46: High-end 1950s kitchen with asphalt tile floor and no border (House Beautiful – March 1955 – p. 11)



Figure 4.47: 1950s advertisement for mosaic tile flooring and counters. Although this found favor in bathrooms, it was not frequently utilized in the kitchen (House Beautiful – Aug. 1955 – p. 31)



Figure 4.48: 1950s advertisement for rubber tile flooring. The inlay is now considered dated. Rubber tile flooring was an expensive alternative to asphalt tile (House Beautiful– June 1955 – p. 159)

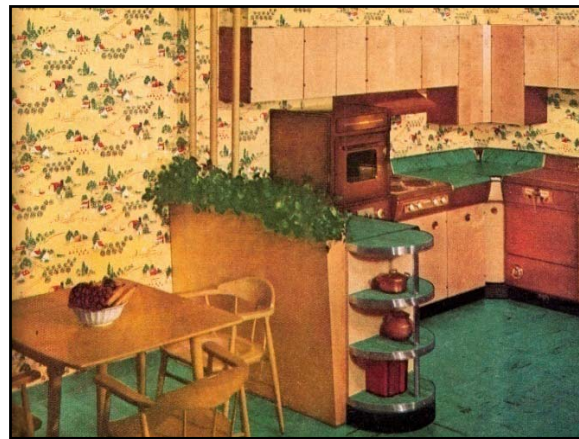


Figure 4.49: Middle-income kitchen with asphalt tile and no borders (House Beautiful – Aug. 1955 – p. 97)

CHAPTER 5

A CHRONOLOGY OF TWENTIETH CENTURY KITCHENS THROUGH THE 1950S

1900-1920

The physical design of the kitchen from 1900 to 1920 was mostly a variation on the late nineteenth century kitchen. The changes consisted of the accommodation of new technology and the adoption of new methods of work. The kitchen space remained a dimensionally static area into which selected new technology was introduced. The technology the kitchen received primarily consisted of the introduction of electric lighting and electric or gas stoves. Domestic refrigeration, although available by the middle of 1910s, was a cumbersome and expensive setup: essentially an icebox near the kitchen that was cooled by compressor units usually located in the cellar below.

The kitchen itself was typically a box-shaped room with one or two exterior walls. The kitchen was surrounded by supporting rooms such as: larders for storage in the absence of an array of cabinets, enclosed kitchen porches that frequently included the icebox, and a pantry separating the dining room from the noise and odors of the kitchen. This pantry had evolved to serve as the china and silver cleanup and storage area in upper-income homes by 1900. Sinks of soft metal that would reduce the incidence of breakage were suggested for these areas. Less-affluent homes removed the dining room dishes to the kitchen for cleanup after which they were returned to the pantry for storage until the next meal.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Gdula. 99.

The 1900-1920 kitchen contained four primary points: the cooking range, the sink, a kitchen worktable, and a standing, movable kitchen cabinet. Improvements in the kitchen largely revolved around making the workflow more efficient. Concerns with sanitation led to fully tiled walls and floors in upper-income homes. Middle-income homes addressed the same cleaning issues by having painted walls finished with coats of washable varnish. Floors were typically linoleum with several coats of varnish laid over. There was also an interest in the use of “sanitary” molding for door and window trim. This molding, with its complete absence of ogee turns or other creviced cuts, was chosen to facilitate easier cleaning.

Although the workflow of the kitchen was greatly discussed, very little attention was given to the actual room. Some of the best information regarding kitchens from this period may actually be found several decades later when the perceived flaws of the earlier space were being analyzed in preparation for bringing the room up to date.

In one 1930s proposal on how to bring an early 1900s kitchen in line with modern usage, the first thing the article notes is that the sink needs to go beneath a window. The writer also proposes creating a rear entry by converting a pantry for this purpose.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ “House Beautiful Yesterday and Today.” *House Beautiful* 68-2 (Aug. 1930): 130.

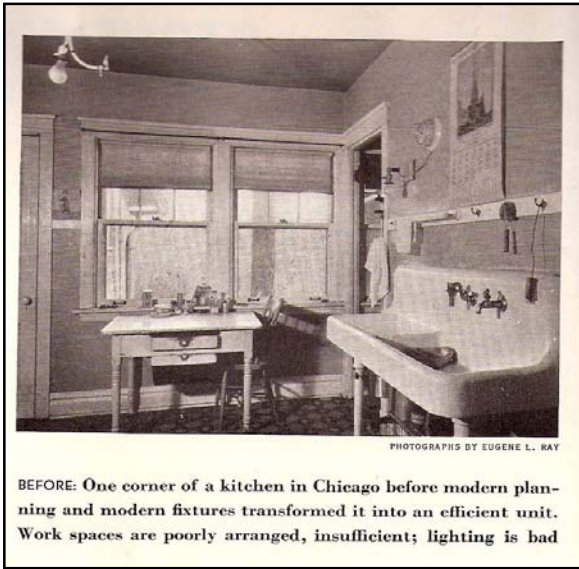


Figure 5.1: Two views of 1900- era kitchens in the 1930s prior to updating – both show single unit combination gas/electric ceiling fixtures as the sole source of lighting (House Beautiful – Sept. 1934 – p. 90)

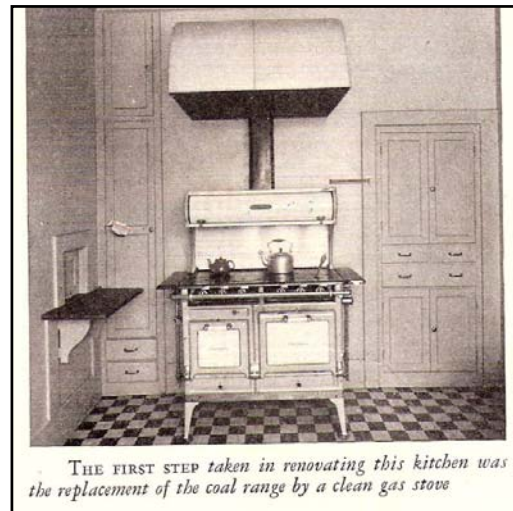
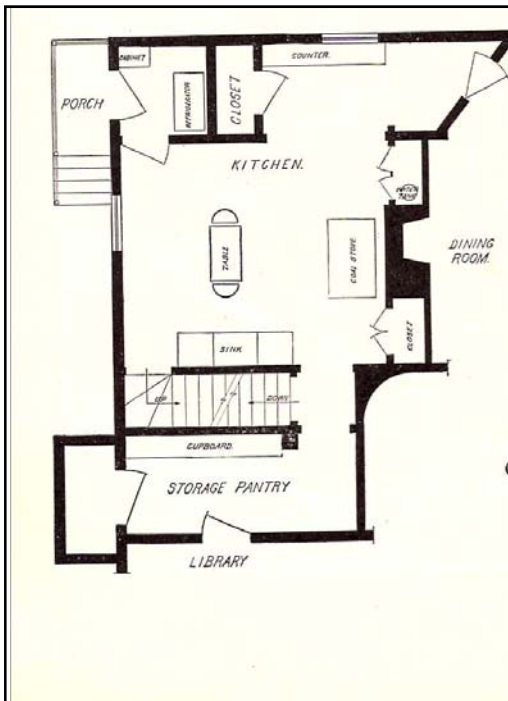


Figure 5.2: Floor plan and photograph of a circa 1900 kitchen prior to remodeling in the 1930s (House Beautiful – Aug. 1930 – p. 152)

The illustrations shown for this section are typical of the layout and outfitting of a middle-income kitchen from this period. Although the spaces were admittedly up to thirty years old at the time they were photographed, there is a clear lack of attention to detail that borders on the dismissive. Figure 5.1(left image), for example, with its absence of nearby cabinets, suggests that dishes will need to be carried away after cleaning: presumably through the door to the left of the sink into a pantry. The arrangement of the stove to the built-in cabinet in figure 5.1 (right image) shows that the stove placement impedes easy access to the drawers on the lower left side of the cabinet.

The cabinet itself would require a ladder to reach the higher parts. If one tries to imagine using the kitchen drawn on the plan in figure 5.2 (left image), it becomes quickly evident that the large amount of square footage is a disadvantage with various storage areas that serve in lieu of cabinets placed at uncomfortable distances from the preparation table and stove. It is unclear where dish storage for the dining room china is located. The library to kitchen access takes one through a storage pantry.

The problems identified by the author of the article that accompanies these photographs include storage issues and the outdated coal-burning stove. She also makes mention of the fact that the room is too big.¹²⁷ This is something that is frequently noted when writers from the 1930s forward discuss turn of the century kitchens. A writer in the 1920s states that “the old-fashioned housekeeper will at first be struck by the small size of the kitchen” in describing a brand new 1920s house.¹²⁸ This difference between the overall size of a kitchen of the 1900-1920 period compared to the typical space following 1920 must have been very apparent to people of the time, although on paper the difference is not quite so striking. It may be that the

¹²⁷ Eleanor P. Rand. “An Old Fashioned Kitchen Re-planned.” *House Beautiful* 68-2 (Aug. 1930): 152.

¹²⁸ Rose Greely. “A Small House of Distinction.” *House Beautiful* 52-5 (Nov. 1922): 423.

absence of perimeter cabinetry that was becoming common in the 1930s made the room without the cabinets appear to be larger. Open floor space is less in the 1930s, but wall to wall space is not so very different from the 1900s era.

The nineteenth century was known for invention and innovation. Advances in ventilation represent but one area where people of that period went to great lengths to create environments in which they could be comfortable. Based on the great strides the Victorians made when they gave their undivided attention to a subject, it may be assumed that the men that designed them paid very little attention to the kitchens of 1900. In this instance, at least some of the accusations that have been leveled against the men who designed rooms are valid. This would be a valid reflection of nineteenth century thought.

Male architectural designers and critics used language in a slightly different way than we do now when describing the features of a house. To architect Andrew Jackson Downing, rooms were convenient because they were near something; they were useful because they were large. Robert Kerr, nineteenth century author of *The Gentleman's House*, made distinctions between comfort and convenience in his writing: comfort being the enjoyment of the home by the owner, and convenience having to do with some nebulous functioning issue that Kerr assumed required no attention as it was the purview of the servants.¹²⁹

Restoring a space of this sort should be a relatively simple matter from a material perspective. The keynote would be a Spartan appearance. Very little in the way of furnishings goes into a 1900s kitchen: a wood or coal burning stove, possibly a gas range, a wall-mounted sink, an icebox refrigerator, and a table and some chairs pretty much finish up the room. The room should be under-lit, as a single fixture seems to have been the norm. The floor covering would most often be linoleum.

¹²⁹ Witold Rybczynski. "Home: A Short History of an Idea." New York: Penguin (1987): 160.

1920s

During the 1920s, kitchen design underwent physical changes in order to accommodate the new appliances that were becoming available. Although interest in sanitation continued, the laboratory appearance that had been the ideal – if not the reality - during the previous two-decades was replaced with a softer look as the use of color was encouraged in kitchens. “Cold white tile and polished surfaces look not merely clean but actually disinfected – an unpleasant connotation about food,” one article asserts. The author goes on to suggest a Dutch Blue with white trim and copper accents as one way of softening the appearance of the kitchen. Wallpaper may be used if varnished, and the addition of curtains in a washable material is recommended.¹³⁰ The placement of the sink below a window became a standard design ideal and pantries, in spite of the assertions of some authors, continued to be present both in drawings and actual construction.

The most obvious shift was the beginning of breakfast nooks as a near-at-hand place to serve meals, thereby reducing the number of trips between the kitchen and dining room. Actual nooks in the kitchen could be created from a storage pantry and consisted of a dining booth arrangement. If the available space was larger, tables and chairs for eating were placed. A variation on the breakfast nook was the utilization of the service pantry between the dining room and kitchen. This provided the advantage of near to hand serving in a less formal setting than the actual dining room provided without having to eat in the kitchen itself. Some radical proposals were offered but seldom adopted. In 1926, one author suggested doing away with the dining

¹³⁰ Phyllis Ackerman. “Color in the Kitchen: White is Not the Only Accompaniment of Efficiency.” *House Beautiful* 52-3 (Sept. 1922): 212.

room altogether and pressing it into service by enlarging the living room or through use as another bedroom.¹³¹

Particular attention was paid to the placement of icebox refrigeration. Many designs continued to make accommodation for an icebox by providing a specific niche for the location, ideally against an outside wall for ice service that would not require the iceman to come into the kitchen. It was considered very desirable to further increase the efficiency of the icebox by placing it on a north wall - when practical - in order to keep sunlight from directly striking the icebox thereby extending the amount of time between loads of ice.¹³²

A review of advertising in home design magazines of the time shows that advertisements for iceboxes did not give way to electric refrigeration until the very end of the decade when, for the first time, there were more advertisements for electric refrigerators than iceboxes. Kelvinator offered a transition unit: and electric compressor that could be placed in the ice compartment of an icebox thereby eliminating the need for the iceman. In fact, several manufacturers continued to manufacture cabinets for refrigeration that could either use ice or an electric compressor with the disclaimer in the ad that the electric compressor was not included. Refrigerators – other than iceboxes – tended to be on legs for ease of cleaning beneath. There were some early attempts at integrated refrigerators that were covered to the floor, but so much space was given to the ventilated compressor that occupied the lower portion that very little space remained for actual refrigerated storage.

¹³¹ W. G. Loring. "The Diminishing Dining Room." *House Beautiful* 59-2 (Feb. 1926): 159.

¹³² Vera Cook Salomonsky. "Putting the Service Entrance to Work." *House Beautiful* 51-1 (Jan. 1922): 51.

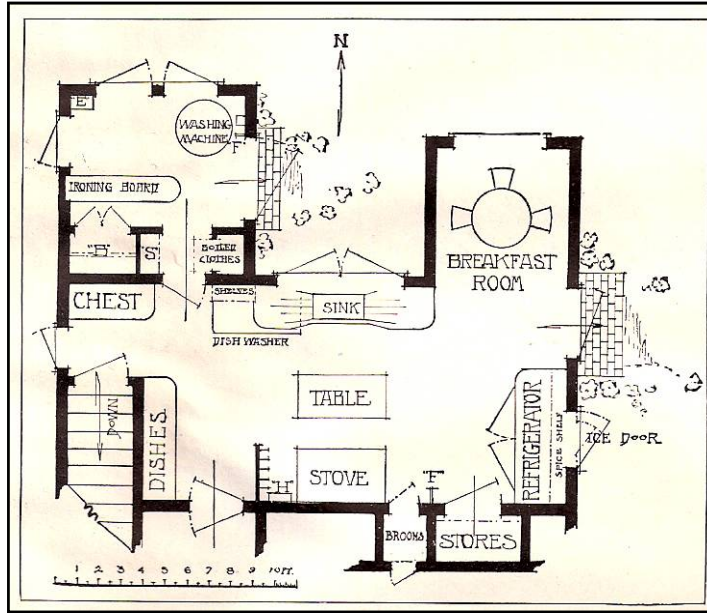


Figure 5.3: Drawing showing ideal kitchen arrangement at the beginning of the 1920s. Features include: sink beneath window; icebox with exterior loading capability; an eat-in breakfast area (House Beautiful – August 1922 – p. 138)

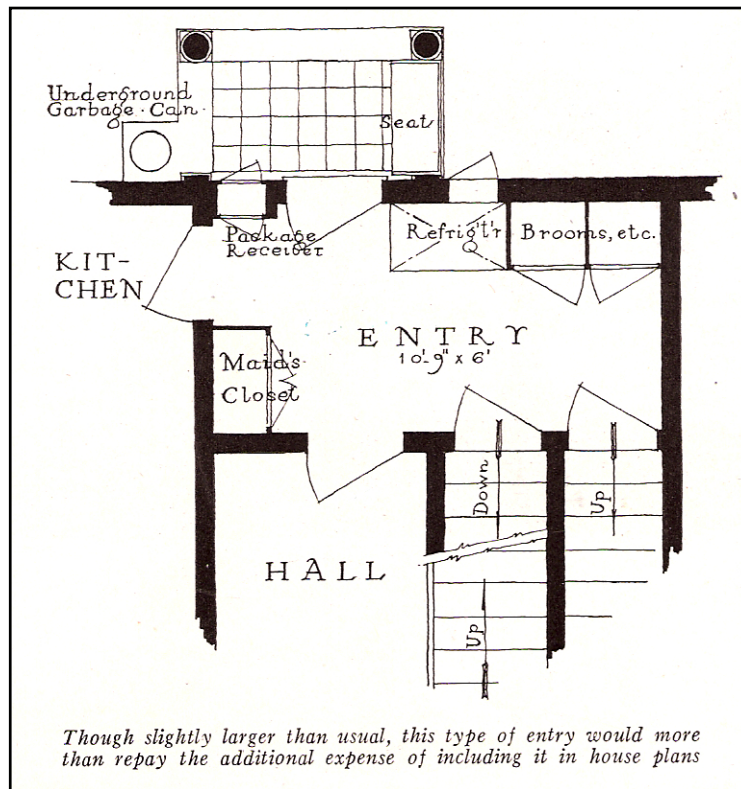


Figure 5.4: Ideal kitchen entry from the early 1920s includes icebox on outside wall, package receipt area, and in-ground garbage receptacle (House Beautiful – January 1922 – p. 51)

Larders, although smaller than earlier storage rooms, were not entirely eliminated. The increasing availability of a variety of processed foods with longer shelf-lives required storage accommodations. Some authorities suggested adding larders rather than eliminating them.¹³³ Although built-in cabinets were discussed as early as 1922, movable kitchen dressers or cabinets that accommodated almost all of the kitchen utensil and food storage continued to serve most families throughout the 1920s.¹³⁴ The favored storage system for middle-income kitchens continued to be the Hoosier cabinets, variations of which were produced by a variety of manufacturers.

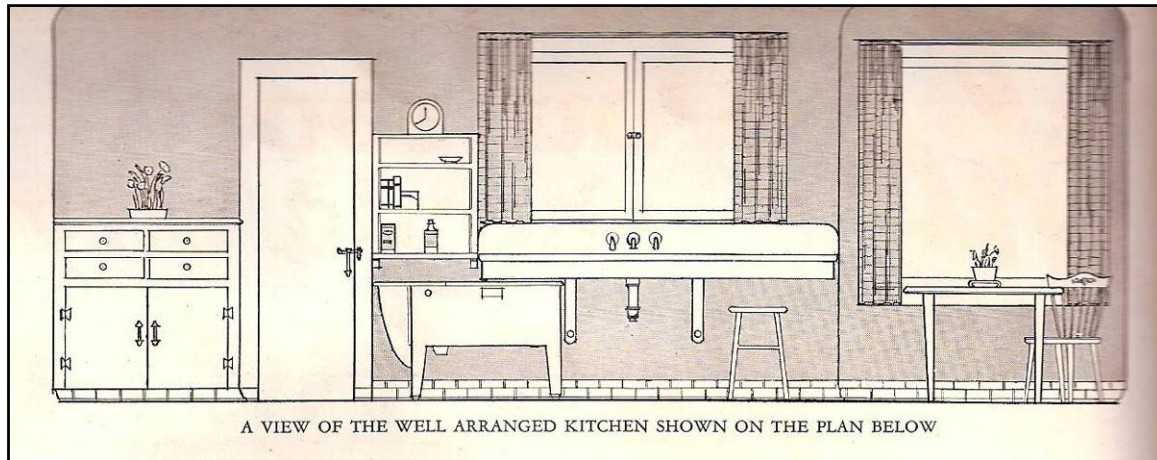


Figure 5.5: Illustration of an ideal kitchen elevation in the early 1920s. Note the absence of built-in cabinets – all items are gathered from the pantry and icebox prior to preparation. (House Beautiful – August 1922 – p. 138).

Where continuous cabinetry does appear in advertisements, it is clear that the concepts of uniformity have not yet been adopted. By the mid 1920s, some of the manufacturers of “Hoosier” type cabinets are advertising expanded lines of modular units, and countertops with limited built-ins occasionally appear in the background of advertisements for other kitchen products.

¹³³ “From Non-descript to Georgian.” *House Beautiful* 68-2 (Aug. 1930): 132.

¹³⁴ Mary R. Thomas, and Herbert Gwynne. “Drudgery, Come Out of the Kitchen!” *House Beautiful* 52-2 (Aug. 1922): 139.

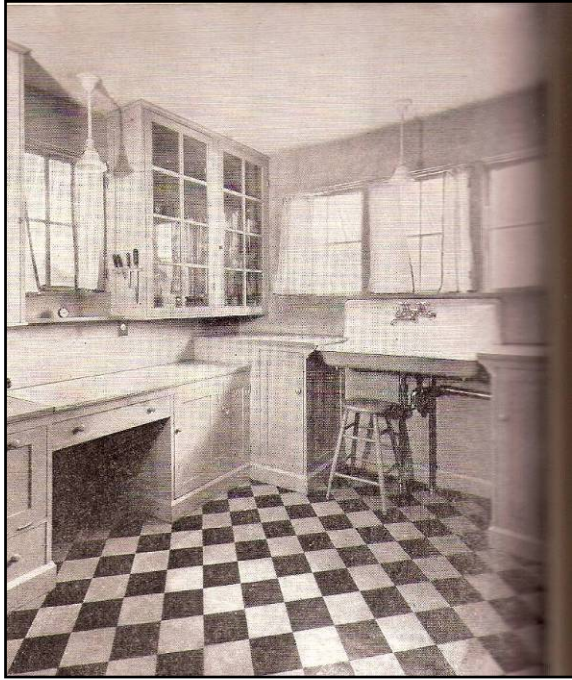


Figure 5.6: Early appearance of cabinets and counters – note various heights to accommodate both sitting and standing work (House Beautiful – Nov. 1922 – p. 422).

A New-Style Kitchen as Arranged by Leigh French—Architect

NOW....INTO THE KITCHEN
....An Undreamed-of Smartness

STRAIGHTENED, smoothed, are the lines of kitchen arrangement. Away with shadowy corners. Away with jumpy protruberances. Gone is the most stubborn offender of simplicity of line; gone is the protruding, old-fashioned gas range. In its place stands the new Smoothtop Gas Range. Note how Smoothtop's flat surfaces plane off with those of other kitchen furniture. See how the smart lineal effect is carried on, unbroken, by Smoothtop's smart console lines! Projecting far less into the room. Smoothtop, nevertheless, provides for greater cooking surface. Too, Smoothtop cuts off its light—for the oven, no longer a box perched high on one end, has been lowered to convenient, table-level level.... The passing of the old range and the coming of Smoothtop have inspired a distinctly new kitchen style; have created an undreamed-of kitchen smartness.... Six new style kitchens, as planned by six prominent architects, are shown in the book captioned below. How interesting to study them—and to create a kitchen room of one's own, in this smart, new style!

Smoothtop
GAS RANGE
WITH SUPER VULCAN BURNERS

Figure 5.7: Cabinets in background of mid 1920s ad (House Beautiful – June 1926 – p. 760).

KITCHEN MAID
STANDARD KITCHEN UNITS

Units make the kitchen modern and complete

In any new home or apartment—large or small—no matter how the kitchen is designed—you can have the beauty and convenience of Kitchen Maid Units. You can use one or any number of them—according to your needs. Group the units together or separate them in different parts of the kitchen—each unit or any combination is complete and finished in appearance.

Kitchen Maid Units save space—save time—save labor. They give you the circulation of smooth door construction and rounded inside corners, which you can get only in Kitchen Maid equipment.

Yet with all their efficiency and comfort, Kitchen Maid Units cost no more than old-fashioned cupboards. Mail the coupon for catalog showing the remarkable completeness of Kitchen Maid Units.

WASMUTH-ENDICOTT COMPANY
ANDREWS, INDIANA
Representatives in all Principal Cities

KITCHEN MAID
STANDARD KITCHEN UNITS

WASMUTH-ENDICOTT CO., 1115 East Main Street, Andrews, Indiana
If in Canada, address Branch Office, Waukegan, Ontario

Please send me information regarding the units checked:

Full-sized, complete (refrigerator) units
 Kitchen cabinets for cabinet-top use
 Combination 21 1/2" W. with refrigerator, combination (refrigerator, broiler, toaster, egg, and hot plate) in one cabinet
 21 1/2" W. Full-sized, partial-height units
 21 1/2" W. Full-sized, partial-height units
 21 1/2" W. Full-sized, partial-height units
 21 1/2" W. Full-sized, partial-height units
 21 1/2" W. Full-sized, partial-height units
 21 1/2" W. Full-sized, partial-height units
 21 1/2" W. Full-sized, partial-height units

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____

Figure 5.8: Early advertisement for modular kitchen cabinet units. (House Beautiful – Feb. 1926 – p. 210).

Although a standard for sink heights was becoming established at 36 inches, this rule was not yet being applied to the other newly emerging surfaces. A design article from the early 1920s notes one appropriate height for the sink and another appropriate height for a preparation counter.¹³⁵

The favored flooring was, of course, linoleum. This material was available in grades with the primary difference being the milled thickness and depth of pattern imprint: the less expensive goods were thinner and the pattern wore off easily while the more expensive products were thicker with the pattern imbedded deep in the material. Linoleum floor coverings were appreciated for their continuous, washable surfaces. Advertisements displayed a wide array of colors and patterns available.

Upper-income kitchen design tended to remain unchanged compared to the 1900-1920 period. The typical setup continued to stress a physical separation from the house proper through the utilization of a butler's pantry. Larger homes provided a servants' hall. Large pantries served as storage areas for kitchen areas that remained without cabinets. The preferred cooking range remained wood- or coal-fired. The kitchen had a set of sinks used for food preparation and cookware cleanup. Preparation was largely done on a large central table that stood between the stove and the sink. Dining room cleanup was most often relegated to the butler's pantry where the china and silver was stored. Sculleries – or dedicated wash-up areas -- appear less frequently.

¹³⁵ Rose Greely. 423.

1930s

Kitchen configurations from 1930 to 1940 generally reflect the wider acceptance and expectation of having built-in kitchen cabinets with 36” high countertops.¹³⁶ It would be misleading to suggest that a consensus exists regarding the use of larders and pantries. Articles directed toward remodeling alternately suggest removing or replacing larders, pantries, and porches in almost even numbers. Drawings for new construction tend to include the pantries on finer homes and exclude them on moderately priced construction. Clearly, new construction aimed at middle-income homeowners was generally smaller, but they were often more efficiently planned with a strong emphasis placed on eliminating many unnecessary steps in the kitchen.¹³⁷

Plans for kitchens rarely show accommodation for iceboxes, refrigerators having become the norm. Even in instances where the location formerly assigned to the kitchen porch is incorporated into the kitchen proper, the back entrance remains for several reasons; chief of which is the continuing recognition of guests being received at the front door while service (including servants) come and go through the rear. This remains true even in middle-income house design. Although one might presume that the rear entrance also serves as the most convenient entrance for unloading groceries from a car, design had not quite caught up with reality. In designs where garages are attached to the house – a novelty in the 1930s – little thought is given to the distance from the garage to the kitchen area. This is due in large part to the fact that groceries in urban and suburban areas continued to be frequently ordered by telephone and then delivered by the store to the residence. That these deliveries were made to an inconveniently located rear entrance was the deliveryman’s problem and not the homeowner’s. This reflects several shifts. Most notable is that, with the increased reliance upon processed

¹³⁶ Lupton. 41.

¹³⁷ R. W. Sexton. “The House of Today.” *House Beautiful* 67-5 (May 1930): 598.

foods, it was no longer considered necessary or a good use of time to do shopping first-hand and inspect every item personally when food products of uniform quality could be ordered by telephone.¹³⁸ These goods were delivered directly to the kitchen door more often than groceries were brought in by the owner's car.

In a 1950s article comparing kitchens of the 1950s to those of the 1930s, social historian Jane Fiske described the 1930s incarnation as “fragments of the disintegration that began when the servants picked up and left.” Fiske further states that it was during the 1930s that the woman who had formerly been the lady of the house was reduced to being a mere housewife. She describes the kitchens in which these women had to work as being “fiercely efficient, clinical, and isolated.”¹³⁹

Referring to ideals for kitchens in 1930, another magazine article suggests morning sun should be considered important along with achieving good cross-ventilation. It is also suggested that one might consider placing the kitchen at the front of the house, which can have two benefits: 1) it reserves the quieter rear of the house for the public rooms; and 2) it makes it easier to answer the front door from the nearby kitchen.¹⁴⁰ The subtext to this author's writing deals with the increasing level of noise on the street side of houses in the 1930s – even in suburban settings – in which the automobile traffic renders the front less preferable to the quieter and more private rear. This is a complete inversion of previously held ideas regarding the front and rear of a house.

Another article that addresses how to remodel an old (pre-1920) kitchen suggests that the main problem with the old kitchen was that it was too big. In making a case for enclosing the area below the sink with a cabinet, the author notes that the exposed plumbing found there is

¹³⁸ McFeely. 61.

¹³⁹ Jane Fiske Mitarachi. “Is the Kitchen Disintegrating?” *Industrial Design* 1-4 (Aug. 1954): 66.

¹⁴⁰ Arthur C. Holden. “What is Good Planning?” *House Beautiful* 67-1 (Jan. 1930): 60.

unsanitary: a contradictory argument since the same is not said about exposed plumbing below the bathroom sink for another twenty years. In any event, the “problem” with the exposed drainpipe coupled with observations concerning insufficient storage – both drawer and cabinet – in the kitchen proper actually lays the groundwork in the case for integrated cabinetwork in the kitchen.¹⁴¹ The author further notes that the continued use of coal ranges in older kitchens contributes to extra cleanup from the coal dust coupled with the disadvantages associated with fuel burning ranges compared to their modern electric and gas counterparts.¹⁴² She also points out that the way deliveries are received in the kitchen should be analyzed for efficiency as well as considering whether or not provision is made for kitchen help (either the wife or a maid) to have a place to sit while working.¹⁴³

The writer’s solutions to the problems associated with old kitchens are to replace coal burning stoves, move hot water heaters to other areas, add a service pantry for additional storage, add a Monel metal sink in pantry for dish cleanup, raise the existing kitchen sink to a 36-inch height (the emerging standard) and add a second window over the sink to improve ventilation.¹⁴⁴

A review of this article reveals several possibly hidden points. This writer – a woman – does not, for example, suggest that the service pantry between the dining room and kitchen be removed thereby affording additional workspace. She simply feels the space needs correction: the addition of a Monel metal sink in order to prevent the dishes from the dining room having to be carried to the kitchen for cleaning before being returned to the pantry for storage.

The choice of Monel metal, by the way, is interesting. This particular alloy was credited with causing less chipping of china than porcelain enamel over cast iron – the standard sink – in

¹⁴¹ Eleanor P. Rand. “An Old Fashioned Kitchen Re-planned.” *House Beautiful* 68-2 (Aug. 1930): 152.

¹⁴² Rand. 152.

¹⁴³ Rand. 152.

¹⁴⁴ Rand. 153.

addition to cleaning up very easily with just a little scouring. The writer offers two reasons why the stove should be removed: it creates a cleaning problem, and it is not modern. She considers the comfort of the kitchen workers by wanting additional ventilation and suggesting they have places to sit while working. Her questioning the ease with which deliveries to the kitchen are received alludes to the fact that most urban and suburban homes received their groceries by delivery at the back door.

Several choices for countertops and sinks were available during the 1930s. Most popular was the drop-in sink constructed of porcelain enamel over cast iron just as its wall-mounted precursor had been. Alternatives consisted of new alloys. Monel metal sinks with integrated drain boards and countertops were heavily advertised in the 1930s.¹⁴⁵ There is also an emphasis on economical use of space where small (compared to the 1900s kitchen) but efficiently planned kitchens are based on the principle of no wasted space.¹⁴⁶

Advertisements for major appliances from 1930 to 1940 revolve around stoves, electric refrigerators, and dishwashers with some attention given to the first generation of garbage disposals. If one looks beyond the product and into the room that is illustrated, one will find the beginnings of the modern kitchen as early as 1934. The fully integrated kitchen with all built-in cabinets, universal-height counters, and a window over the sink is the very essence of what will become the stereotypical suburban kitchen for middle-income families in the post-World War II era.

¹⁴⁵ Lupton, 54.

¹⁴⁶ R. W. Sexton. "The House of Today." *House Beautiful* 67-5 (May 1930): 397.



Figure 5.9: 1930s front-loading dishwasher
(House Beautiful Nov. 1934): 18

Articles from the 1930s are not restricted to the plight of the middle-income kitchen. In a 1934 piece titled “Kitchen to Come,” the author, Frances Heard, creates a scenario in which women had revolted from the kitchens and taken jobs in offices, which they left at the end of the day only to come home and start cooking. Heard points out that these women are now advancing to executive positions and that they are applying their office principles to their kitchens. The scenario Heard creates has a limited application if the social and feminist history of the period is to be believed. She may have been thinking of Clare Boothe Luce and women like her. One doubts, however, that Miss Luce, otherwise known as Mrs. Henry Luce, applied many principles to her kitchen beyond going over menus with her cook. Heard reviews three kitchens that belong to three women executives and discovers that each one is: 1) impeccably sanitary; 2) incidentally beautiful; and 3) increasingly workman-like.¹⁴⁷ All three kitchens are air-conditioned -- the upper-income method for solving the kitchen ventilation problem -- and all three have expensive

¹⁴⁷ Frances Taylor Heard. “Kitchen to Come.” *House Beautiful* 76-5 (Nov. 1934): 74.

Monel metal countertops along with linoleum floors.¹⁴⁸ The subtext is that organizational skills may be aptly applied in the kitchen with at least three fabulous results. The article also attempts to reinforce the prevailing fiction of that time that housework – in this instance, kitchen work – is really no different than office work or professional work. It’s all much the same, save the venue.¹⁴⁹

One of the best ways to understand the evolution of kitchens is to review articles on remodeling. These provide excellent insight about what to look for when surveying and analyzing an actual kitchen with respect to remnants of previous kitchens. These also serve as a point of departure for discussions on when and why certain features fall from favor and why the new features are being adopted. A 1934 article (**Figure 5.10**) titled “A Kitchen Brought Up To Date” provides an excellent example.¹⁵⁰

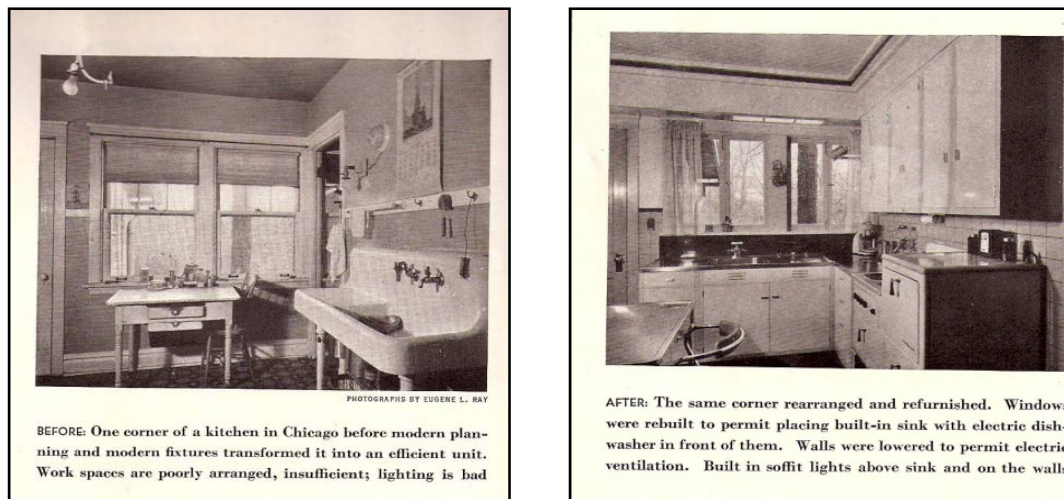


Figure 5.10: “A Kitchen Brought to Date”
(House Beautiful – Sept. 1934 – 90): Before and after remodeling.

¹⁴⁸ Frances Taylor Heard. 74.

¹⁴⁹ Frances Taylor Heard. 34.

¹⁵⁰ “A Kitchen Brought Up to Date.” *House Beautiful* 76-3 (Sept. 1934): 90.

The hallmarks of the earlier kitchen include a wall-mounted sink with exposed plumbing, and a worktable in lieu of cabinets. The remodeled kitchen includes fully integrated upper and lower cabinets, and the sink with dishwasher has been relocated beneath the reconfigured window.

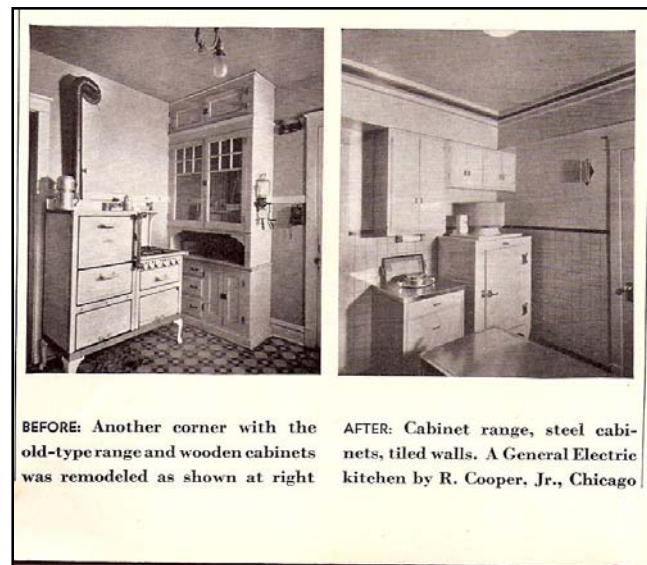


Figure 5.11: “A Kitchen Brought to Date”
(House Beautiful – Sept. 1934 – 90): Before and after remodeling.

The second illustration (**Figure 5.11**) from the article shows an earlier kitchen, the faults of which include a fuel burning range and wooden cabinets. The remodeled kitchen replaces the single wooden cabinet with a full array of steel manufactured cabinets and a modern electric range. This brings up two interesting points. The movement toward built-in steel cabinets reflects the adaption of manufacturing to the market: the manufacturers that formerly produced “Hoosier” cabinets for kitchens retooled for the production of standardized modular units for installation in both new construction and remodeled work. One of the advertising points for steel cabinets was their inherent sanitation factors: easily scrubbed and no crevices for bugs. Simultaneously, the remodeled kitchen sports an electric range that sits squarely on the floor

compared to the stove that it replaced, which stood on legs. The earlier stove represented a previous generation's ideas concerning sanitation: easy accommodation of daily cleaning both around and below an appliance, fixture, or room surface.

This style of stove – the stove that is enclosed all the way to the floor – became the standard for at least the next thirty years. Along with the continuous countertops at 36-inch heights and one-foot deep upper cabinets, these became defining features that would not really be questioned until the 1950s.

The dream kitchen of every Bride

● General Electric has made the "dream kitchen" of every bride come true... a gay, colorful kitchen where she is proud to entertain friends informally, or invite her guest for an inspection tour. Here all kitchen drudgery is banished. In this new age of electrical living the busy turmoil of yesterday's "workshop of the home" is unknown. The G-E Kitchen is a marvel of modern beauty, cleanliness, and efficiency that releases maid or mistress from hours of kitchen routine each day. Here electricity performs the tasks... human hands only "direct," magic electric servants "do." A G-E refrigerator provides the ice, makes dainty frozen delicacies and safely preserves the perishable foods. The G-E dishwasher washes and dries all dishes sparkling clean, without chipping or breakage of the finest china or glassware. The automatic General Electric range simplifies cooking, eliminates baking failures, and gives foods that delicious flavor only possible with electric cookery. A complete General Electric Kitchen can be had on the G-E Step-by-Step Plan, one unit at a time... or as a complete installation including lighting, cabinets and decorating. G-E Kitchens are not "standardized"... each is planned and designed for the individual home. See your nearest General Electric dealer

The New G-E Imperial Range
 With electric cooking the heat is scientifically controlled. Guessing on time or temperature is eliminated, and cooking becomes so simple the meals of a novice rival those of the experienced chef. Foods are cooked in their own natural juices. They are more healthful and taste better.

for suggested plans and estimates or write to General Electric Kitchen Institute, Section HF-5, Nela Park, Cleveland, Ohio

GENERAL ELECTRIC Kitchen

Figure 5.12: Illustration showing to-the-floor stove: refrigerator to-the-floor will follow (House Beautiful – May 1934 – p. 108)

The standardization of kitchen cabinetry that began in the 1930s not only benefitted the prefabricated cabinet manufacturers but also facilitated the emerging interest in integrated appliances, beginning with the dishwasher.

IT'S NO LONGER BEING DONE *in Modern Kitchens*

Now a General Electric Dishwasher washes and dries all the dishes in 5 minutes

● In thousands of kitchens ruled by progressive home-makers, hand-dishwashing has today become an obsolete task. Glassware . . . chinaware . . . silverware . . . pots and pans, too . . . are all placed in a General Electric Dishwasher and in 5 minutes the job is done . . . without human hands even touching water.

Think what this means! Tedious hours of toil, the disagreeable dip-dip-dip of dainty hands in greasy water, the unsightly dishpan and unsanitary dishrag . . . all this abolished! No longer do stacks of dirty dishes clutter the kitchen after each meal. Time consumed three times every day in "doing the dishes" is used for other, more interesting things. And, the kitchen is *always* neat and tidy enough to entertain guests in . . . not a dirty dish in sight. all tucked away in the G-E Dishwasher and the cover closed.

Long ago the magic of electricity brought freedom from the drudgery of sweeping, ironing, clothes-washing . . . and now it frees the modern home from the never-ending task of dishes . . . dishes . . . dishes every day. Crude and imperfect as the first electric dishwashers were, they marked a new epoch in kitchen management. Now, G-E engineers have perfected in the G-E dishwasher the electric servant that entirely eliminates this universally hated task of housework.

Dishes are clean, sparkling, and free from chipping and breakage . . . safe from wet, slippery fingers or careless hands. More important, they are also safe from spreading through the family

mouth-born diseases carried by bacteria that luke-warm water does not kill.

Under the startling head "Dishwashing and the Death Rate" authorities urgently point out that hand-washed dishes are a major cause, and constant menace, in spreading such diseases as common colds, "flu" and pneumonia. Protect your family from these germs that may lurk on hand-washed dishes which to the eye appear wholly clean and sanitary. A G-E dishwasher kills these germs with

scalding hot water. The hands in the water are given a good wash. Modern kitchens are yours all day long. Destroy germs and your routine that saves time you could use for more profitable things.

Simple, dependable, trouble-free, the General Electric dishwasher operates for less than 10c a meal to have. Let us send you full information explaining our free-trial offer. The coupon herewith . . . today . . . action will be implied.

There's a General Electric Dishwasher model and size for every kitchen.

GENERAL ELECTRIC **ELECTRIC** *Dishwasher*

GENERAL ELECTRIC CO., Specialty Appliance Sales Dept.
Section HF-4, Nela Park, Cleveland, Ohio

Please send full information on the G-E Dishwasher. No obligation.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Figure 5.13: Illustration shows integration of built-in dishwasher into dimensions of standardized cabinets (House Beautiful – Apr. 1934 – p. 18).

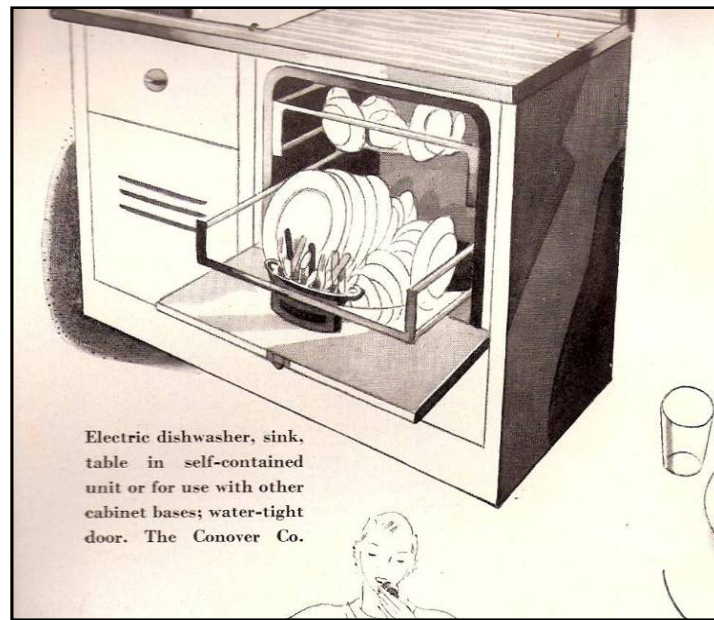


Figure 5.14: Front-loading dishwasher as part of a manufactured steel sink unit (House Beautiful – March 1934 – p. 66).

Although impeded by the economic depression, dishwasher design advanced during the 1930s. Offered in both top-loading and front-loading designs, dishwashers of the period had corrected many of the problems that had plagued them in the 1920s. The most important correction was the use of rounded corners on the interior washtubs in order to eliminate the trash-trapping square corners that had previously taken as much time to clean as dishwashing. Indeed, some claims in advertising are difficult to believe and, if true, would be wonderful advantages today. For example, a 1934 advertisement for G.E. dishwashers claims that the dishes are washed and dried in five minutes (**Figure 5.13**).

While manufacturers such as G.E. produced independent machines that could be installed as built-in appliances in new or remodeled cabinetwork, dishwashers appeared just as frequently in advertisements as an option that could be ordered as part of the sink module in prefabricated metal kitchen cabinet sets (**Figure 5.14**).

Flooring was, of course, linoleum. Illustrations for advertisements of the 1930s indicate a movement away from the two-toned checkerboard patterns that were popular in the 1920s. The checkerboard appears to have been losing favor to the inlaid borders that would continue to be popular through the 1940s.

1940s

Kitchen design following World War II evolved stylistically from design of the late 1930s as it had been at the outbreak of the war. Dimensionally and functionally, however, the recovering economy coupled with increased demand for housing led to changes in middle-income housing with an impact on kitchens that could not have been anticipated. During the post-war 1940s, suburban tract housing took over as the location of choice for the middle class. As single level ranch houses became dominant, more tasks were assigned to the kitchen space. The net result was that while overall square footage for middle-income housing shrank slightly, the proportion of space given to the kitchen increased due its multi-functional duties.

Kitchens began to include an eat-in area either as an adjunct to – or in place of – a separate dining room. Countertop configurations frequently included the peninsula protrusions that had been experimented with during the 1930s. Dining height counters – breakfast bars that could double as buffets – separated the kitchen area from the eating area without actually creating a barrier. All of this was designed with an eye toward reducing the amount of movement required to prepare, serve, and clean up from a meal by bringing the entire sequence of events into a single area within the kitchen. With the advent of less formality in meal service, lifestyle magazines advocated entertaining in the kitchen, thus recognizing the fact that the kitchen was moving away from being viewed only as a workspace.

“Dream kitchens” in product advertising aimed toward the middle-income homeowner show rooms that reconcile users with the conflicting ideals of the modern factory and the private home.¹⁵¹ In a “you may win this kitchen” contest, among the modern features being promoted were the specialized vegetable bins, slide-out shelves, and metal-lined flour and sugar bins that had been available in high-end cabinets before the war.

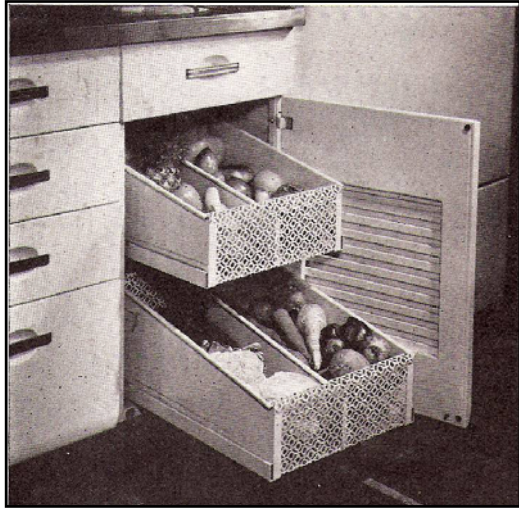


Figure 5.15: Special cabinet features for a “You May Win this Kitchen” contest in 1946 (House Beautiful – Feb. 1946 – p. 84).

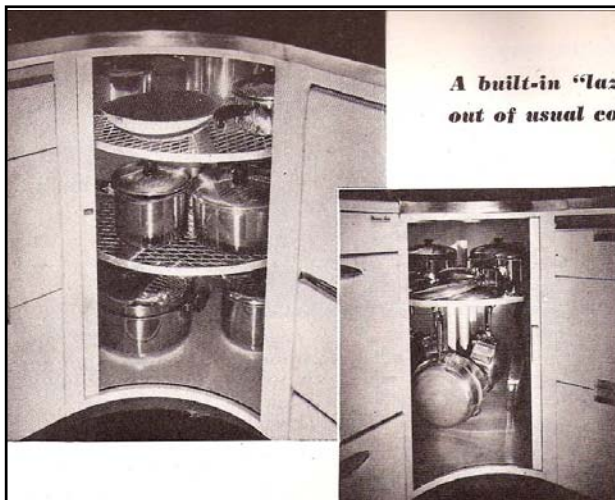


Figure 5.16: Specialized drawers and lazy-susans for corner cabinets designed to increase efficiency and reduce the amount of hard-to-reach space appear in 1940s cabinetry for both middle income and upper income houses (House Beautiful – May 1946 – p. 108).

¹⁵¹ Lupton. 65.

Kitchen reconfiguration also revisited some older ideas. The issue of whether or not to include storage pantries as part of good kitchen design had not been resolved during the 1930s. The issue continued in the post-war 1940s, again without a clear winner. Though not as spacious as their prewar counterparts, pantries – or slightly-oversized closets – did appear in many middle-income houses. These were not, however, merely walk-in rooms that were thoughtlessly lined with shelves. These compact spaces were studies in efficient storage in homes where space was critical. Bringing the laundry either near or directly into the kitchen was also recommended as a means of increasing both work and space efficiency.¹⁵² The perfect design for the middle-income kitchen was “a laundry, an office -- you can eat in it -- and freeze food in it.” The dream kitchen being offered included walls covered with the same plastic material as the countertops – for ease of cleaning – but still included linoleum floors.¹⁵³



Figure 5.17: Compact pantry configurations for middle-income houses in the 1940s (House Beautiful – Feb 1940 – p. 81).

¹⁵² “House Beautiful’s Home Pioneers Study Course” *House Beautiful* 88-5 (May 1946): 106.

¹⁵³ “You Have Never Seen Such a Kitchen.” *House Beautiful* 88-5 (May 1946): 104.

Although the moral imperative associated with housework that had existed in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries had diminished, and the status of housework itself had declined between the World Wars, the results and standards of hygienic housekeeping were still valued.¹⁵⁴ Kitchen design in the 1940s reflects the genuine desire of middle class housewives to have extremely efficient houses with respect to housekeeping. House design generally -- and kitchen design specifically -- reflected the goal of making a clean house more easily achievable without any domestic help.¹⁵⁵

For appliances such as stoves, the physical appearance was much the same as at the end of the 1930s. For the postwar 1940s, new features such as oven lights, auto-ignition for gas ranges, built-in surface lighting, and double ovens fairly constituted any advances for this product.¹⁵⁶ Refrigerators had additional space (meaning they were larger than before), offered hydrator drawers to keep food fresher longer along with butter shelves that would keep the product at a good consistency for spreading, and began to come with unbreakable shelves. Crosley created a stir when it placed shelves in the door thereby creating the “Shelvador” unit.¹⁵⁷

One genuinely new major appliance was pushed and pushed hard in the 1940s: the home freezer. Most appliances – such as refrigerators and stoves – had frequently been the same old appliance trotted out with a new appearance and a few more bells and whistles. The home freezer, however, solved the problem of limited storage capacity that was typical in most refrigerators. This was extremely important in a new world where an increasing number of frozen food offerings combined with the popularity of home freezing could justify the expense of a freezer. In 1946 alone, 25 new models – ranging from chest to upright – were offered. One

¹⁵⁴ Palmer. 18.

¹⁵⁵ “No Family is Too Small for a Freezer.” *House Beautiful* 88-1 (Jan. 1946): 52-53.

¹⁵⁶ Charlotte Eaton Conway. “What to Look for in a New Gas Range.” *House Beautiful* 88-11 (Nov. 1946): 184-85.

¹⁵⁷ Charlotte Eaton Conway. “How to Shop for a New Refrigerator.” *House Beautiful* 88-10 (Oct. 1946): 142-45.

writer observed that she had “the equivalent of a grocery store and specialty restaurant at her command in the form of a freezer unit.”¹⁵⁸

There were problems remaining to be solved in order to achieve the ideal middle-income kitchen. The results of a survey taken at the end of the year in 1946 showed these as the top seven items on the respondents’ wish lists: 1) fluorescent lighting in kitchens; 2) two-way service between the kitchen and dining room that can be disguised when not in use; 3) cabinets that are designed so that when opened the contents can be seen at a glance; 4) counters at proper heights; 5) toe set backs under cabinets; 6) at least one place with knee space to sit down and work; and 7) at least one countertop surface that can receive hot dishes without marring.¹⁵⁹

For those who could move into a new house in the suburbs, writers recommended an overhaul for those kitchens that had not already received the treatment. In listing the faults with his circa-1900 kitchen, one writer notes the following problems: 1) tongue and groove dado, 2) golden oak cabinets and exposed plumbing make a dreary place to work, 3) out of date kitchen equipment, 4) inconvenient cabinets, 5) insufficient storage, and 6) inadequate lighting. The solutions to these problems were 1) remove the dado and replace it with easy to clean tile, 2) install a scalloped cornice to lower the apparent height of the ceiling, 3) install additional outlets and new lighting, 4) add a black border to the existing linoleum floor, 5) center a new sink on the double window, and 6) place a ventilator over a new cooking range.¹⁶⁰ The fact that almost all of the complaints are stylistic rather than substantive issues says a great deal about the role the mercurial concept of taste plays in kitchen design.

¹⁵⁸ Evabelle Collins. “My Year Has Thirteen Months.” *House Beautiful* 88-8 (Aug. 1946): 98-9.

¹⁵⁹ “The Short-Term Forecast: What People Want Right Now.” *House Beautiful* 88-12 (Dec. 1946): 226.

¹⁶⁰ Albert C. Smith. “It was a Nice Kitchen in 1900 but Not by 1946 Standards.” *House Beautiful* 88-7 (June 1946): 76-7.

Upper-income homes began to incorporate some of these changes after having lagged for nearly twenty years. It can be difficult to discern the differences between the kitchen in a 1920s era upper-income house and its 1930s counterpart. This does not so much represent resistance to change as indifference toward the kitchen for certainly other areas of the upper-income home benefited from technological advances where they directly affected the homeowner. For example, while early modern bathrooms were utilized as luxury spaces for upper-income households in the 1920s, the same homes viewed the kitchen as an extension of the servants' quarters.¹⁶¹ The availability of servants, however, was declining and this provided the initial impetus to making changes in the upper-income kitchen.

There was some confusion in the effort to come to terms with the decreasing availability of servants. One article, interestingly titled "Here's How We Get Along Without Servants," has a floor plan that incorporates many of the latest techniques for creating efficiency in the modern home: compact storage is utilized, and the kitchen is in close proximity to the dining room, although the two are separated by a rather large pantry. Perhaps less well thought out is the newly outfitted commercial-sized laundry that is harbored far away in the basement. But most telling of all is the fact that the house sports a maid's room and bath, which combined are larger than the kitchen behind which they are situated.¹⁶² No explanation is offered for the contradiction between the stated goal of the article and the generous quarters for a presumably non-existent maid. Perhaps the message is one of hope: that we will muddle through for the present, but keep a place for the maid in case she returns.

There was further confusion with respect to adopting more casual dining options. The suggestion was made to the upper-income homeowners to consider entertaining in the kitchen.

¹⁶¹ Lupton. 42.

¹⁶² "Here's How We Get Along Without Servants." *House Beautiful* 88-4 (April, 1946): 85.

“If your friends feel most at home in your kitchen, and you like having them there, with the right planning the kitchen can be the real heart of your home.”¹⁶³ Some upper-income homeowners did not need anyone’s permission; they just ploughed ahead, like the citizen of San Francisco who did a novel thing when he created an eat-in kitchen complete with a commercial stove.¹⁶⁴ Still, the lesson was clear: eating in or near the kitchen did not necessarily have to involve a middle-income dinette set amidst a lot of shiny porcelain appliances.

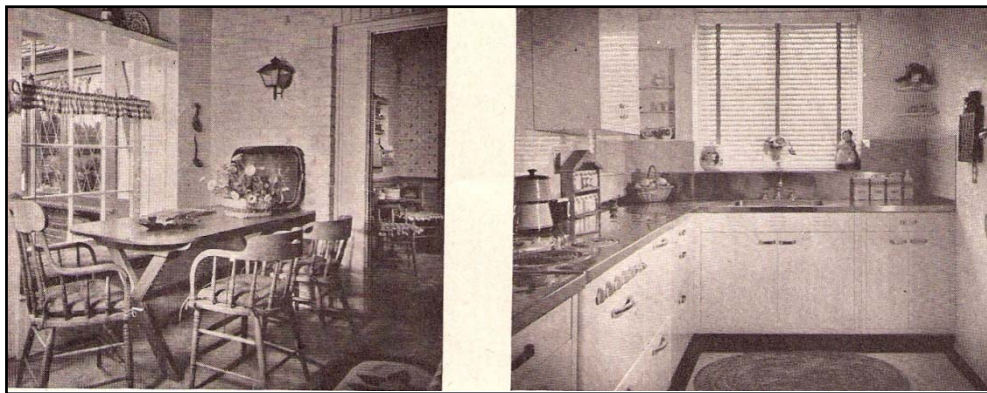


Figure 5.18: Ideas for enclosing a nearby porch and creating a tasteful dining area as part of the kitchen (House Beautiful– Nov. 1946 – p. 169).

According to other authorities, there would be no combination kitchen-dining rooms for the upper-income homeowner just yet. A breakfast room that served as an informal dining room was suggested. As noted by one author in an article directed towards new brides of means, “Entirely separate from the kitchen and dining room but adjoining both is the breakfast room.”¹⁶⁵ The injunction was noted but not necessarily strictly adhered to as actual upper-income homes from the period frequently have less than separate but generously dimensioned breakfast rooms.

¹⁶³ Marion Gough. “If You Like to Entertain in the Kitchen.” *House Beautiful* 88-11 (Nov. 1946): 168.

¹⁶⁴ Helen Farmer. “Character Sketch of a City Farmer.” *House Beautiful* 88-11 (Nov. 1946): 160.

¹⁶⁵ Charlotte Eaton Conway. “The Kitchen for a Pretty Bride.” *House Beautiful* 88-6 (June 1946): 74.

By the late 1940s, however, even home designs that still included accommodations for a live-in servant – present or not - often included a pass-through from the kitchen to the dining room. In the upper-income designs, these pass-through openings frequently incorporated elaborate screening devices to shield the view of the kitchen from the dining room when the dining room was in service but admittedly, these sorts of innovations were not often found in traditionally styled houses.

Storage and butler's pantries of the larger more traditional variety continued to appear. Although it has been asserted by some social historians that the butler's pantry had disappeared altogether by the beginning of the 1930s, this is not quite the case in upper income homes where the space often continues to be included in plans through the 1950s. Occasionally used for cleanup, pantries did continue to serve as sound and noise buffers, staging areas for meal service in the dining room, and china and silver storage for less used dinnerware in homes where refinement remained an issue. This was occasionally the case as well for designs where the overall style of the house was contemporary.

The assertion by feminist historian Phyllis Palmer that live-in servants virtually disappear after 1945¹⁶⁶ is contradicted by the fact that accommodations for servants continue to be shown on floor plans for upper income homes regardless of style at least through 1955. It is assumed that some of these quarters were occupied, but it was not an ideal circumstance for the employee.

By 1944, black women made up 60% of the workforce for domestic servants.¹⁶⁷ With segregation legal across the United States, the maintenance of separate entrances and toilet facilities remained as important as ever in the design of the service wings. The kitchen itself usually served as the separating point between the family areas and the servant areas. Black

¹⁶⁶ Palmer. xiii.

¹⁶⁷ Palmer. 13.

women who served as daily help at least had the advantage of returning to their friends and families in the evenings, albeit in racially-segregated neighborhoods. The black woman who lived-in could not even go for a walk through the white neighborhood in the evening unless she remained in uniform or was attending to the children.¹⁶⁸ For this reason, one imagines an isolated existence when viewing the quarters reserved for help – a small oasis of privacy.

Stylistically, although white and shiny cabinets remained the standard in both middle- and upper-income kitchens, relief was found through the coordinated use of strong color on countertops and flooring. The primary difference between the two kitchens was one of quality more than appearance where cabinets were concerned. The use of metal cabinetry alone was not an indication of quality: tract houses and mansions alike were apt to use prefabricated metal cabinets. But the difference between the painted sheet metal of the tract house kitchen and the heavy metal cabinets with baked enamel glazing found in the more expensive kitchen made the real difference. Fine, prefabricated wood cabinets with extremely durable painted finishes were also used for finer kitchens during the 1940s. Countertops were frequently made of the same linoleum as was found on the floors although plastic sheet goods such as Formica were becoming available. Fine kitchens tended to use metal countertops in some areas, particularly as part of an integrated sink/counter combination.

One major difference between the middle and upper-income kitchens that begins in the 1940s is the tendency for middle-income kitchens to have its features almost on display. A different direction emerged in upper-income kitchens that were intended for use by the family rather than as a servant's domain. Once the decision was made to actually be in the kitchen, upper-income kitchens tended to take full advantage of all of the modern conveniences as quickly as they developed. Rather than display them, however, they worked them into interiors

¹⁶⁸ Palmer. 68.

that might suggest, for example, a farm kitchen with knotty pine cabinets.¹⁶⁹ This trend would later filter down to the middle-income kitchens.



Figure 5.19: A very basic prefabricated kitchen – typical of the type found in tract housing (House Beautiful– March 1946 – p. 154).



Figure 5.20: A higher quality prefabricated middle-income kitchen with some additional features such as a breakfast bar (House Beautiful – May 1946 – p. 162).



Figure 5.21: A high end prefabricated kitchen – very similar in appearance to the product aimed at the middle market, the difference lies in the quality of material and features available (House Beautiful– April 1946 – p. 120).



Figure 5.22: Stainless steel sink and drain board – feature found on high end kitchens in lieu of the porcelain enamel sections used in kitchens of lesser quality (House Beautiful – December 1946 – p. 17).

¹⁶⁹ “An Old House Can Work Like a Modern One.” *House Beautiful* 88-2 (Feb. 1946): ?.

1950s

“This is the year that will go down in kitchen history – the year when the budding ideas of a whole decade burst into bloom all at once,”¹⁷⁰ announces a 1955 article on the state of the American kitchen. Though hyperbolic – as such pronouncements usually are – this may be one time when the ballyhoo was not too far off the mark. Indeed, the 1950s really was the decade in which everything came together for the kitchen. Rather than having one or two paradigms for kitchen design, dozens of arrangements emerged from a few guiding principles. One of the keynotes of the modern kitchen consisted of such things as the use of color on cabinets and metallic finishes on appliances, or the use of natural wood tones and colors on appliances. Another keynote was the recognition of component pieces from which the user assembled her own ideal kitchen arrangement of appliances. Finally, the kitchen was recognized as a place for entertaining. As the article notes, these changes make the earlier, post-war kitchens as antiquated as the awkward workrooms of 1925.

A self-conscious awareness of a uniquely American kitchen style emerged at this time. They were typically larger, but most observers felt that it was more than just a matter of space that separated an American middle class kitchen from, say, its British counterpart. It was thought to include such things a heightened demand for convenience, emphasis on state-of-the-art lighting, the availability of labor saving devices, and a general cheerfulness about the space.¹⁷¹

The 1950s kitchen arrangement that is closely identified with the 1940s continued throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s in some houses, but the open kitchen - the arrangement that would become the dominant design for the next fifty years – began in earnest in the 1950s.

¹⁷⁰ “Hot News from the Wonderful World of Kitchens.” *House Beautiful* 97-6 (June 1955): 94.

¹⁷¹ Jean Murray Bangs. “What is a Truly American House?” *House Beautiful* 92-9 (Sept. 1950): 82.

The evolution of the open kitchen resulted from the convergence of two ideas that had begun in the 1940s: the pass through and the breakfast room. Pass-throughs eventually evolved to the point that the partition wall in which the pass-through had been set was eliminated entirely. At the same time, the eat-in areas of kitchens moved away from merely functioning as utilitarian spaces that facilitated the efficient serving of meals and began to take on stylistic identities of their own. Even in those kitchens that were too small to support a full-sized breakfast area, the use of a small drop leaf was recommended at the very least.¹⁷²

Fireplaces and built-in china cabinets – features borrowed from formal dining room arrangements – were used to make the aesthetics of the kitchen superior to the function; the function by now being taken for granted. The opening of the kitchen occasionally went beyond the eating area and into the den. This trend culminated with the family room arrangement of open kitchen, eating area, and family sitting area that was deliberately designed with a “you can’t tell where the kitchen ends and the living room begins” effect.¹⁷³ Another writer pointed out that the goal of combining rooms was to benefit each space while keeping the kitchen screened but not separated.¹⁷⁴

In the 1940s, a poll had revealed a preference for fluorescent lighting in the kitchen. By the 1950s, fluorescent lighting had become the standard for middle-income kitchens with the typical arrangement consisting of a central ceiling fixture with a second fixture usually located directly over the sink. Fluorescent lighting was also promoted for upper-income kitchens as is evidenced by the fact that high-end manufacturers, such as Lightolier offered both integrated and stylized fluorescent fixtures in their advertisements.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Charlotte Eaton Conway. “Take it Easy, Lady.” *House Beautiful* 92-10 (Oct. 1950): 210.

¹⁷³ Virginia Stanton. “When Your Guests Follow You to the Kitchen.” *House Beautiful* 97-5 (May 1955): 140.

¹⁷⁴ “Look for a Sense of Space.” *House Beautiful* 97-5 (May 1955): 181.

¹⁷⁵ “Lightolier advertisement.” *House Beautiful* 92-9 (Sept. 1950): 168.

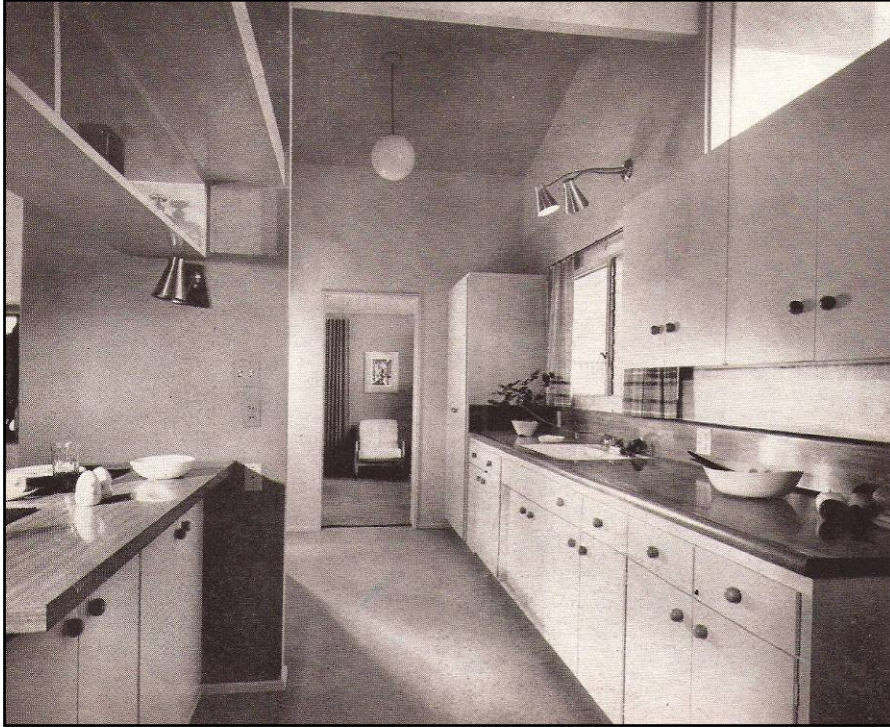


Figure 5.23: Photograph of a middle-income kitchen in a contemporary house that conforms to the ideals of the open kitchen (House Beautiful – May 1955 – p. 180).

Overall household design now successfully addressed efficiency to the point that it was almost given that the carport or garage would directly adjoin the kitchen in order to facilitate unloading groceries. Laundry service was either in the kitchen or a step away from it. The function of the walk-in pantry was supplanted in middle-income houses by a small closet at most.

Although white cabinets lingered they were largely replaced by natural wood finishes or in colors that worked with the overall color scheme of the room. Colored metal cabinets also became available. A number of manufacturers of metal cabinet systems for the spec house aimed at the middle-income market included their own lines of ranges that would integrate into the cabinet system along with sink modules that had the dishwashers built-in.¹⁷⁶ Metal cabinets were, however, on the way out; by the end of the decade they would seldom be seen and considered dated. Much more attuned to the look of the 1950s would be these cabinets seen in **Figure 5.24** and described as “all natural birch plywood, waxed and rubbed with splash-backs and countertops in red Micarta, a highly durable plastic.”¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ “Murray Modern Cabinets Advertisement.” *House Beautiful* 92-11 (Nov. 1950): 81.

¹⁷⁷ Mary Roche. “Freedom from Dogma.” *House Beautiful* 92-7 (July 1950): 81.



Figure 5.24: Birch cabinets described above
(House Beautiful – July 1950 – p. 81).

Ventilation was another technology that advanced to the point of usefulness in the 1950s. Though frequently advertised in the previous decades, there is little evidence that exterior ventilation systems were utilized. Both middle- and upper-income houses in the 1950s frequently used some sort of ventilation. At the least, middle-income homes had a vent with electric fan installed in the ceiling above the stove. More typical was the hood with electric fan that was fitted directly above the stove. Kitchens in upper-income homes tended to have high quality, hooded vents directly over the cook-tops or stoves with custom-made hoods available in a variety of materials.



Figure 5.25: “Vent-a-Hood” advertisement – aimed at middle-income housing market (House Beautiful – July 1950 – p. 105).

Countertops that had previously been covered with linoleum products began to be covered in hard plastics. Micarta has been previously mentioned, but it was the product Formica (**Figure 5.26**) that would become the leading countertop material for nearly three decades beginning in the 1950s. Promoted as “non-fading, rugged, can be cleaned with a damp cloth, comes in a wide variety of colors and patterns,” Formica had just about every advantage desirable in the kitchen with the exception that it would scorch if hot pots and pans were set directly on it.

Stop pinching yourself, Mother!
It's Real... Real **FORMICA**

4 REASONS WHY FORMICA IS YOUR BEST BUY!

- 1. Largest and longest selection of...
- 2. Clear, clean, undistorting color patterns with...
- 3. Super-smooth, bludge-free cabinet make-up finish from...
- 4. Thirty-seven years continuous production experience.

You may find it hard to believe that a kitchen so close to your dreams can be so down to earth practical. Actually, you, yourself, have been helping to prove the practicality of Formica for more than 20 years. Whenever you have eaten in a restaurant it's a good bet you were served on a Formica surface. Now this same Formica on your kitchen surfaces gives you non-fading color and new beauty with proved ruggedness that means years and years of carefree use. Genuine Beauty Bonded Formica on sink tops, cabinet tops, table tops, and walls, cleans with only a damp cloth—never needs painting or refinishing. A selection of many colors and patterns is available in choosing your color scheme. Formica is unharmed by boiling water, alcohol, fruit acids and cleaning alkalies. Many famous name cabinets come with Formica tops or a local Formica fabricator can build them to your order.

Write, it's FREE... color literature "The Story of Beauty Bonded or Home with People." Look under "Plastics" in your classified phone book for your local Formica Fabricator. If none is listed, write Formica, 4650 Spring Grove Ave., Cincinnati 22, O.

"Just as good" is a habit. Look for the label. Invest in genuine Beauty Bonded Formica.

Beauty Bonded **FORMICA**
at Home with People
at Work in Industry

Figure 5.26: Formica advertisement from the early 1950s (House Beautiful – Sept. 1950 – p. inside front cover).



Figure 5.27: Example of 1950s metal prefab cabinets in colors other than white (House Beautiful – Feb. 1955 – p. 154).



Figure 5.28: Example of 1950s middle-income cabinets in natural wood finish (House Beautiful– Aug. 1955 – p. 97).



Figure 5.29: Example of contemporary metal cabinets (House Beautiful – March 1955 – p. 10)

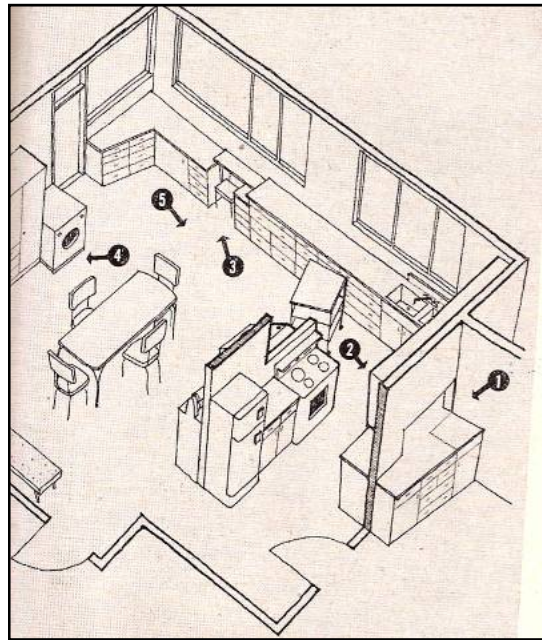


Figure 5.30: Design for multi-use kitchen space (House Beautiful – Aug. 1955 – p. 127).

It was left to the homeowner to select from among the wide number of variations available on appliances. This was particularly true of stoves and ovens with respect to drop-ins versus stand alone units. By and large, most houses photographed for magazine layouts tended to utilize the built-in ovens – presumably for the sheer convenience, which led to the use of drop-in range tops in the place of integrated stoves but this was by no means a universal rule.¹⁷⁸ Colors for appliances also became available. In addition to white – which remained the most popular – colors such as coppertone (brown), pink, yellow, or turquoise were available in addition to stainless steel or metallic copper finishes.



Figure 5.31: Example of middle-income kitchen with stained wood cabinets and stainless built-in appliances (House Beautiful – Mar. 1955 – p. 25).

¹⁷⁸ “The Trend that Turned into a Bandwagon.” *House Beautiful* 97-6 (June 1955): 96.

Home freezers continued to be an important part of the appliance line up. As the number and variety of items available as frozen foods being offered continued to expand throughout the 1950s, capacity for home freezers increased. A 1950, Amana freezer was noted for having the capacity to hold 630 pounds of frozen food.¹⁷⁹

One of the chores associated with mechanical refrigerators was the necessity of periodic defrosting, a process that was nearly as messy as the problems associated with iceboxes. The solution to this began in 1950 with the introduction of frost-free refrigeration.¹⁸⁰

In upper-income homes, premium lines of appliances such as Thermador and Kitchenaid lent a note of prestige to kitchens that were now open to visitors.¹⁸¹ Creative designs that went beyond matters of efficiency were admired and some of the experimentation that was executed on high-end design was quite dramatic. Even so, it was not unusual to see great lengths taken in upper-income kitchens to incorporate appliances – including refrigerators – into the cabinetwork (**Figure 5.32**). Proposals were made for cabinetwork that eschewed swinging doors in favor of tambours and sliding panels (**Figure 5.33**).¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Charlotte Eaton Conway. “Take it Easy, Lady.” *House Beautiful* 92-7 (July 1950): 101.

¹⁸⁰ Charlotte Eaton Conway. “Take it Easy, Lady.” *House Beautiful* 92-9 (Sept. 1950): 153.

¹⁸¹ “Thermador ad.” *House Beautiful* 97-1 (Jan. 1955): 33.

¹⁸² Charlotte Eaton Conway. “The American Passion for Efficiency.” *House Beautiful* 92-10 (Oct. 1950): 169.

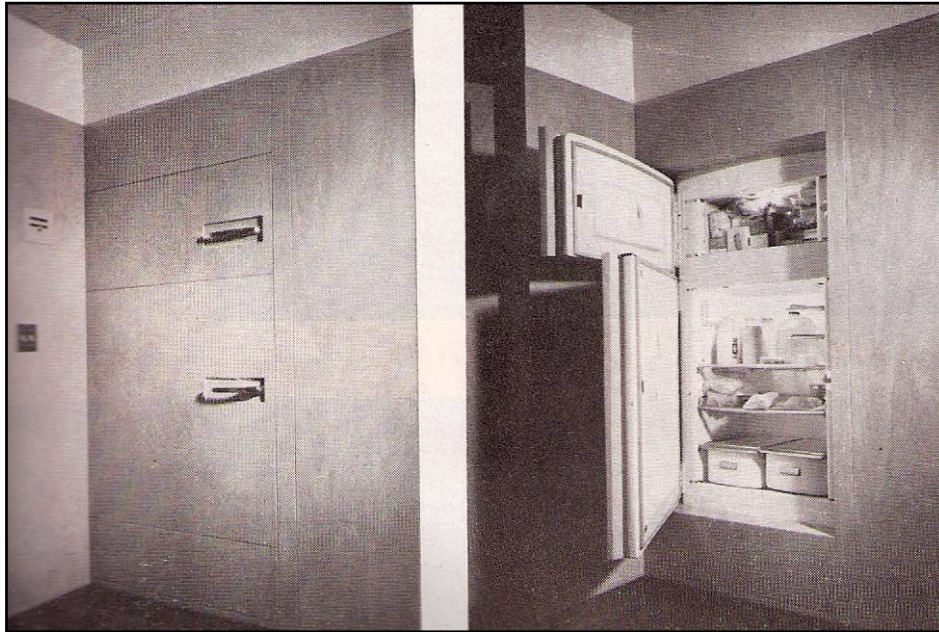


Figure 5.32: Example of 1950s refrigerator fully integrated into contemporary birch cabinet network (House Beautiful – Oct. 1950 – p. 163).



Figure 5.33: Example of 1950s high-end cabinetry with tambour and sliding panels in lieu of hinged cabinet doors – This kitchen also proposes a variety of counter heights to accommodate a variety of cooking activities (House Beautiful – Oct. 1950 – p. 163).

Both middle and upper-income home plans for the 1950s show an interest in easy access for outdoor entertaining from the kitchen. This was facilitated by an expanded line of small appliances that allowed for portable cooking. Electric skillets and toaster ovens joined the existing lineup of small appliances.

Magazine articles tried to surmise the appropriate attitude of the 1950s wife toward these new kitchens and toward novel foods, an interest promoted as “gourmet.”¹⁸³ One article suggests that the mothers of the current (1950s) homemakers would be surprised at them since they had always tried to evade kitchen duties, while their grandmothers would have been embarrassed at their new-found interest, as it was improper for ladies to be all that interested in food.

Expressing an interest in food was now something that superseded simple nutrition. It was food as an art, and it became incumbent upon the woman of the house to combine cans of soup with rice, or powdered gelatin with canned fruit cocktail, and create easy-to-prepare dishes that were interesting both to the eye and the tongue. A survey revealed that the typical 1950s dinner was comprised 40%-70% of easy to prepare foods with the remainder being more complicated “from scratch” dishes.¹⁸⁴ If time was running short, it was possible to even serve glamour foods such as Cherries Jubilee from a can.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Elizabeth Gordon. “A Kitchen for People Who Make an Art of Cooking.” *House Beautiful* 97-1 (Jan. 1955): 44

¹⁸⁴ Elizabeth Gordon. 45.

¹⁸⁵ Julie Polshek. “Pantry Shelf News.” *House Beautiful* 92-10 (Oct. 1950): 197.



Figure 5.34: Example of a high-end 1950s kitchen, suitable for creating gourmet foods – a space that is as stimulating as the food it will produce. This kitchen shows indifference to the “neat” appearance favored by its orderly predecessors (*House Beautiful* – Jan. 1955 – p. 45).

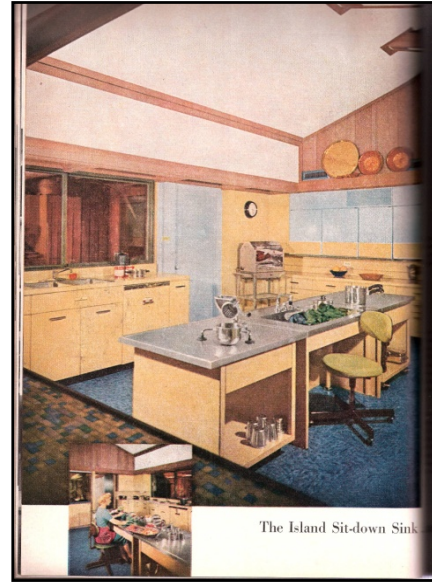


Figure 5.35: Another example of a high-end 1950s kitchen. Emphasis is placed on comfort and convenience – using both an island and pass-through. The overall feeling is more relaxed than the 1940s kitchen (*House Beautiful* – Feb. 1955 – p. 104).

The appropriate style for the 1950s kitchen was achieved by utilizing the new counter arrangement options along with the new technology. The ideal kitchen included a peninsula or island for a multi-sided work area.¹⁸⁶ It was assumed that a garbage disposal and dishwasher would be included as a matter of course. It was important to have the oven capacity to prepare meat in three different ways, according to one authority, and ample refrigerator and freezer space were essential to taking advantage of the food options available.¹⁸⁷ Another authority allowed that a set of double ovens that would permit one to roast and bake at the same time – with both ovens installed at a convenient height – was the ideal goal.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ “The Island Sit-Down Sink.” *House Beautiful* 97-2 (Feb. 1955): 105.

¹⁸⁷ Gordon: 47.

¹⁸⁸ “Three Pace-Setting Kitchens.” *House Beautiful* 92-9 (Sept. 1950): 105.

While the middle-income houses were utilizing ever larger pass-throughs – the point of sometimes eliminating the partition walls altogether – upper-income house plans show a great interest in utilizing creative blinding solutions to pass-throughs. One example, for a formal dining room in a contemporary house, shows a gilt screen with mechanisms for raising and lowering the blind as necessary.¹⁸⁹



Figure 5.36: The gilt screen to the rear is lowered to separate the dining room from the kitchen during meal service. The pass-through serves as a buffet. A similar screen on the dining room side may be lowered to allow removal of the dirty dishes that have accumulated on the buffet without visually disturbing dinner. (House Beautiful – Feb. 1955 – p. 101).

¹⁸⁹ “The Working Wall Is . . .” *House Beautiful* 97-2 (Feb. 1955): 100.

As it had been in the past, the saga of the domestic servant continued to be a topic for discussion in the 1950s, although it was finally admitted that the live-in maid might not be coming back. In the words of one article on the subject, “The maid who once occupied the maid’s room found the 1930s kitchen adequate, and she made no complaints. But the maid’s room is now empty, and the Brindle family handles the household chores themselves.”¹⁹⁰ One of the ways the Brindle family has handled the problem is to move the laundry directly into the kitchen. Space is made for the laundry by eliminating the original large pantries (**Figure 5.37**).

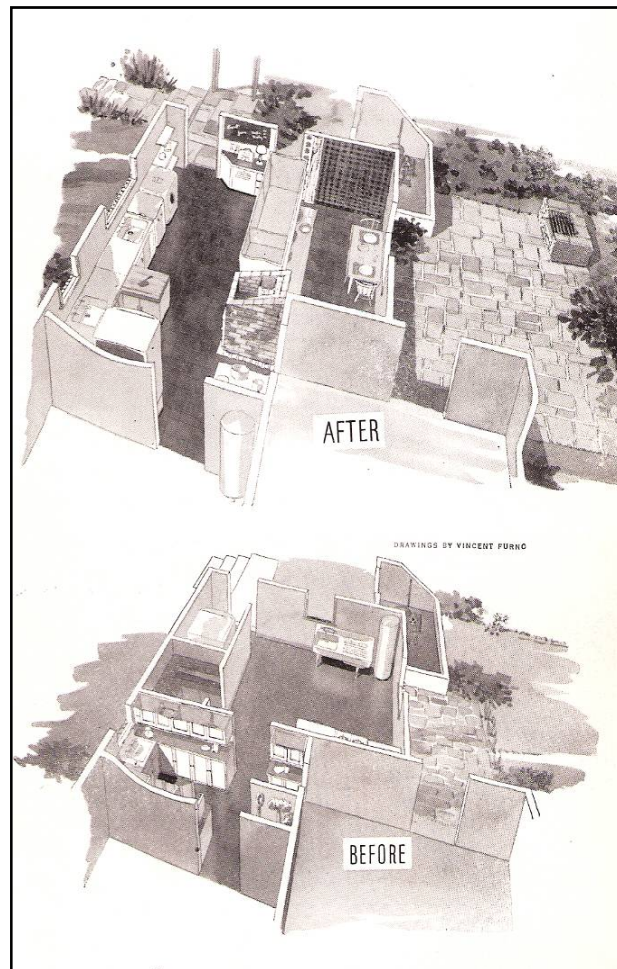


Figure 5.37: Before and after pictures of kitchen revisions made to accommodate a maid-less house (*House Beautiful*– Nov. 1950 – p. 220).

¹⁹⁰ Charlotte Eaton Conway. “Even a ‘Period’ House Can Have American Style.” *House Beautiful* 92-11 (Nov. 1950): 220.

Another writer suggested that the duties of the former servant (now missing) could be compensated for through careful planning. A serving bar, for example, would help retain the custom of meals in the dining room without involving family members in the heavy chore of actually serving food (**Figure 5.38**).¹⁹¹

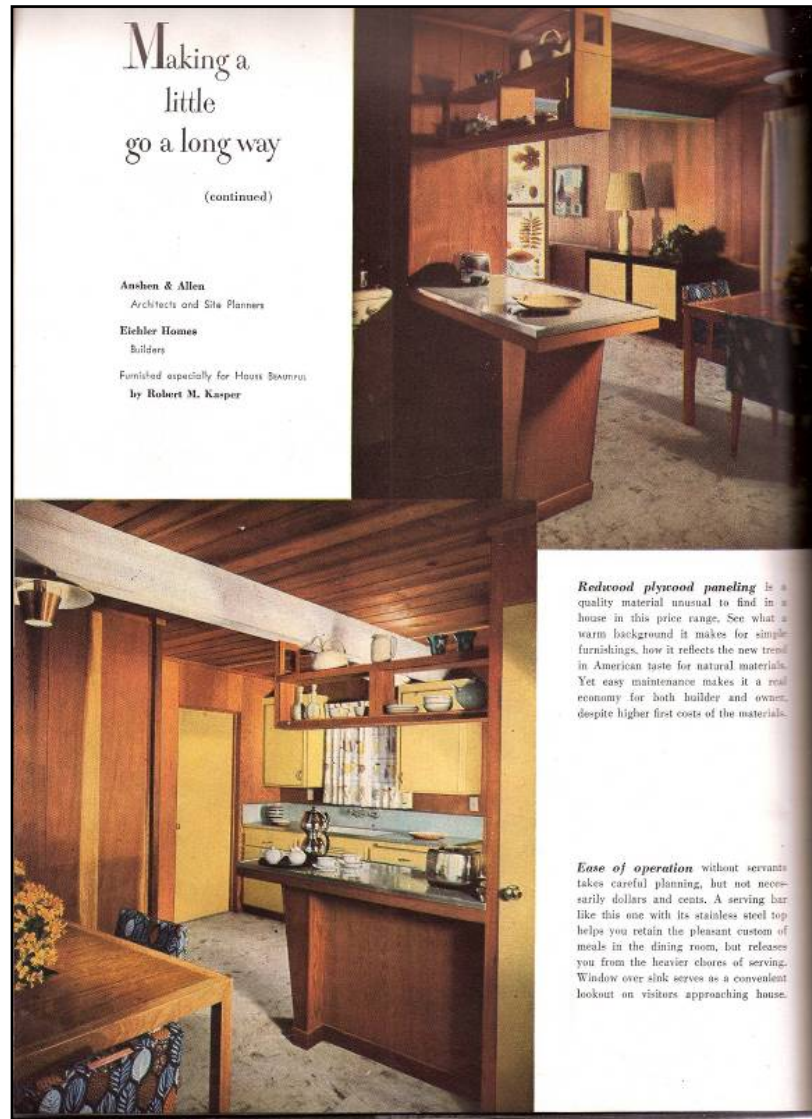


Figure 5.38: A smart looking serving bar takes the place of the missing servant thereby allowing civilized dinner service to continue in the dining room (House Beautiful – Nov. 1950 – p. 212).

¹⁹¹ Frances Heard. "Making a Little Go a Long Way." *House Beautiful* 92-11 (Nov. 1950): 210.

CHAPTER 6

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1: A 1929 Tudor Revival Cottage¹⁹²

1978 West Mercer Drive in College Park, Georgia, is a one-and-a-half story brick house in the Tudor-revival style. It is a contributing property to the historic district in which it is situated. Construction was begun in 1928 and completed in 1929. The house was built on contract by a Mr. Moen for James D. Bazemore. Moen built many of the houses on the adjoining streets either on speculation or on contract during this period of time. James D. Bazemore was a Fulton County deputy-sheriff.

The overall quality of the construction is above average. The first floor of the house includes: living room, dining room, service pantry/breakfast room, kitchen, enclosed kitchen porch, kitchen storage pantry, full tub bath, first bedroom, second bedroom, access corridor with stairs to second floor, and a screened porch. The second floor has two more bedrooms, another full tub bath, a sewing room, and access to an uncovered terrace that sits atop the screened porch.

An interview was conducted at the house with Marie Bazemore Warren, one of the daughters of the original owners, on December 6, 2008. Ms. Warren was ten years old when construction was completed and the house occupied in 1929.

Ms. Warren described the original kitchen. It had a double bowl, cast iron and porcelain wall-mounted sink below the window on the outside wall. A gas range stood on the wall

¹⁹² Note: All facts cited are from an interview with Marie Bazemore Warren taken in the house on December 6, 2008.

opposite the sink. Ms. Warren described this as a four-burner stove on legs with the oven and broiler to the side of the cooking surface. There were no built-in kitchen cabinets; the kitchen was furnished with a “Hoosier- type” kitchen cabinet, a kitchen table, and a couple of chairs. The only built-in in the kitchen was an ironing board and shallow spice cabinet between the door to the enclosed porch and the door to the storage pantry; this is still in place. The kitchen was lighted by a single light bulb fixture on the ceiling. The floor was linoleum.

The kitchen porch was built enclosed with windows as it is currently seen. A niche that is approximately 4’ wide and 2’ deep was included to accommodate the icebox. The service pantry between the kitchen and the dining room has a built-in china cabinet. This room was more frequently used than the dining room for family dining. All table china was stored in the built-in cabinet in this room. It was taken to the kitchen following meals for washing and then returned to this room.

Ms. Warren’s mother canned vegetables in large quantities from vegetables purchased at a farmer’s market located in College Park where food was purchased in bulk for preserving at home. The finished products were kept in the kitchen storage pantry. Ms. Warren’s mother did not drive a car. Most grocery purchases were made daily by telephone to grocers and butchers located on College Park’s nearby main shopping street. The telephoned orders were delivered to the back door.

When asked if she had ever heard how her mother chose an icebox over an electric refrigerator, Ms. Warren emphasized that her mother was involved in neither the design of the house nor in the selection of appliances; this was settled between her father and the builder. This information supports assertions made by historians regarding the lack of input held by women over their own spheres of influence at this time.

The Bazemore family used a daily maid to assist with cooking, laundry, and other housekeeping chores. This conforms to statistical information regarding the use of domestic help in the South during the period. A toilet was provided for the maid in the cellar and consisted of a flushing toilet in a corner of the cellar that was partitioned off with wood paling.¹⁹³

The original kitchen as described by Ms. Warren conforms precisely to the typical kitchen in a better quality middle-income home of the 1920s. The following key features existed in the original kitchen: no built-in cabinets in the kitchen; a wall-mounted sink situated below an exterior window; a movable cabinet for kitchen storage; and a kitchen table as preparation surface. The use of the dining room service pantry as an eating area represents a trend that was much discussed but not yet universally adopted. The accommodation made for the icebox conforms to the period on two points: 1) the transition from iceboxes to mechanical refrigerators was just beginning to tilt in favor of mechanical units in 1929 but iceboxes were still very much in use; and 2) a great deal of attention was still being given to the proper placement of an icebox with respect to convenience to the kitchen and convenience for loading with ice without dripping ice across the kitchen. The presence of a storage pantry conforms to ideals noted in the literature of the period.

The kitchen has been remodeled once and possibly twice. The current kitchen cabinetwork is from circa 1960 work and the overall appearance conforms to ideals of that time. The cabinets are common-grade, carpenter-built cabinets of knotty pine with a dark stain. The hardware is a hammered iron Colonial pattern commonly available around 1960. The current countertops are Formica laid with an integrated backsplash and drip edge front that was not commonly available until the 1970s. The current kitchen includes all of the appliances expected

¹⁹³ Note: The maid employed by her mother at the time of Ms. Warren's marriage in 1941 came to work for Ms. Warren and worked for her until the mid-1990s.

in a contemporary kitchen including a gas range, refrigerator, dishwasher, and microwave oven. The arrangement is somewhat awkward. For example: the door opening from the kitchen to the kitchen porch is set one foot from the exterior wall with the result that the retrofitted base cabinets have to taper from their standard 2' depth back to 1' at this point. Space constrictions also prevented the dishwasher from being placed logically near the kitchen sink; it is placed across the room to the right of the stove.



Figure 6.1: 1978 West Mercer Drive -- December 2008



Figure 6.2: View of kitchen from service panty – December 2008



Figure 6.3: View of kitchen from kitchen porch --
December 2008



Figure 6.4: Washing machine in niche originally designed for icebox on kitchen porch.

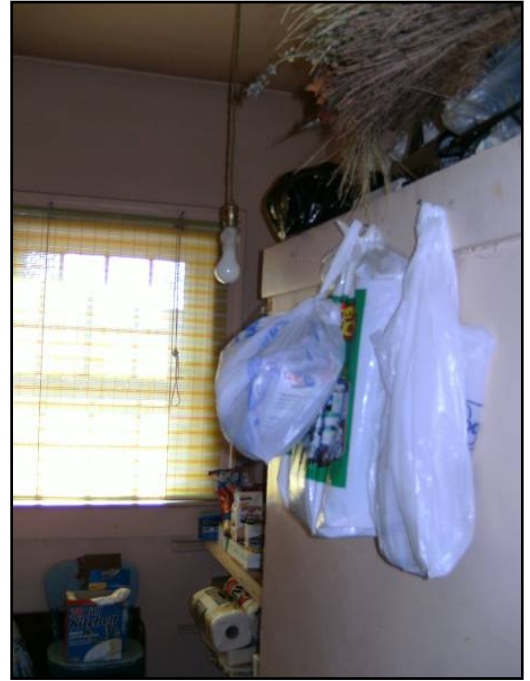


Figure 6.5: Kitchen storage pantry



Figure 6.6: Service pantry eating area - facing exterior wall

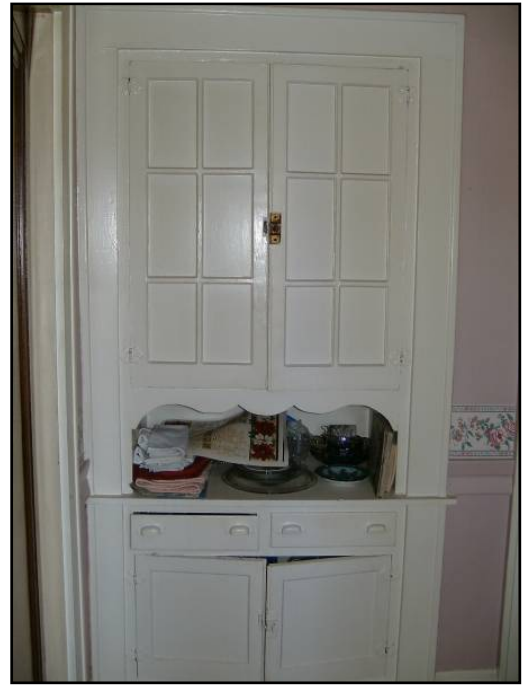


Figure 6.7: Original built-in china cabinet in service pantry



Figure 6.8: Close up of original light fixture and globe in service pantry

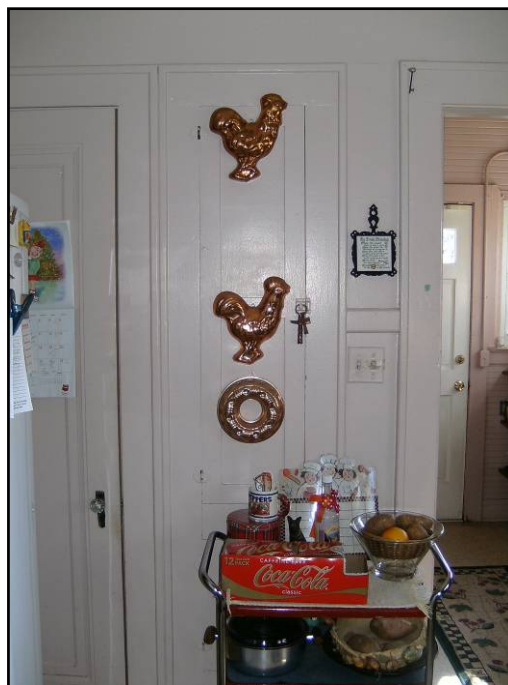


Figure 6.9: Built-in ironing board between door to storage pantry (on left) and door to kitchen porch (on right)

Case Study 2: A 1950s Ranch House¹⁹⁴

This house, located on Young Drive in College Park, Georgia, is a brick ranch house of above-average quality. It was architect-designed and custom-built for Mr. and Mrs. Wesley B. Warren in 1951 at a cost of \$18,000. Mrs. Warren, a professional designer, had an effect on the design of the kitchen by utilizing many of the upper-end design concepts prominently featured in house magazines of the period.

The house consists of the kitchen with finely detailed eat-in area and compact pantry closet, formal dining room, formal living room, entrance hall, den, cross corridor to bedrooms, bedroom one, hall bath (which also serves as bathroom for bedroom one), and the master bedroom with adjoining master bathroom. The original attached garage has been converted to a room, and a two-car garage in a separate freestanding building now serves in its place. The terraces and rear landscaping are particularly important with respect to how they are accessed from the kitchen for outdoor entertaining-- a much discussed topic during the period.

The current kitchen differs very little from the original with the exception of the replacement over time of the original refrigerator, stove, and dishwasher. The original floor - vinyl sheet goods in cobalt blue - has been replaced with ceramic tile, and the lighting has been upgraded. The kitchen cabinets and wood paneling, which were originally stained dark walnut, were painted the color they are now by the original owner 15 years after the house was built.

The original owner made an observation during the interview that the first architect for the house was opposed to including a fireplace in the kitchen. She further mentioned that the architect had not acknowledged her presence during meetings and directed all of his conversation toward her husband. Mrs. Warren worked on getting the first architect dismissed and replaced

¹⁹⁴ Note: All facts cited are from an interview with Marie Bazemore Warren taken in the house on December 6, 2008.

with an architect that she knew was more sympathetic to her desire for a fireplace. This, again, supports assertions by social historians that, as late as the mid-twentieth century, the opinions of many middle class women were not necessarily taken seriously with respect to the design of their kitchens or homes.

As noted, this kitchen represents elements associated with finer design. The cabinetwork was custom-built by a local cabinetmaker to Mrs. Warren's design. It features beveled panels on the doors and was originally stained, as were the boxed beams on the ceiling and the wall paneling. Several innovations in cabinetry were used, such as the special cabinet on the countertop in the corner that is used to hide the standing mixer when it is not in use. The upper cabinet in this same corner uses a lazy-susan for easy access. The dining area of the kitchen included built-in china cabinets with glass panes in the upper cabinets. Another set of built-in cabinets nearer the fireplace was designed as a liquor cabinet.

The original countertops and splash-backs are still in use. The countertops represent the very early use of a design that later became commonplace: an integrated Formica sheet that was pre-mounted to a formed plywood base that included a rolled drip edge and splash back molding at the rear. This material, which would become the standard 15 years later, was rather expensive at this time.

This kitchen was originally outfitted with a dishwasher and hooded ventilator fan. The inclusion of the dishwasher is particularly interesting as the information generally suggests that appliance usage is affected by access to domestic service. The fact that Mrs. Warren kept a full-time maid conforms to the statistics regarding access to domestic service in the South at this time, but the presence of a maid has been thought to imply that she would not have installed a dishwasher. The laundry was in the garage, a few steps from the kitchen. This easy access to the

laundry conforms to the design concepts of the period with regard to ideas about workflow in the kitchen and matters of convenience. The laundry equipment included a dryer, which is another appliance that it has been suggested was not frequently used when a maid was available.

Absent in this house is a toilet for the exclusive use of the maid. Although Mrs. Warren's mother's house had a toilet in the cellar for this purpose, Mrs. Warren stated that her maid used either of the two bathrooms in the house. The difference between the norm in her mother's house in 1929 and her own house in 1951 had not occurred to her before.

Another important feature of this house is the access from the kitchen to the terraces in the rear garden. A strong interest in this type of access to a beautiful patio for outdoor entertaining is frequently mentioned in magazines of the period. Also very typical of the period is the compact pantry closet that serves for kitchen storage.



Figure 6.10: View of kitchen from garage door toward eat-in area.
Note door to patio just beyond the refrigerator.



Figure 6.11: View of kitchen from eat-in area



Figure 6.12: View of kitchen toward sink and dishwasher



Figure 6.13: Close-up of “lazy-susan” cabinet in corner – an innovative feature in high-end cabinetry of the period



Figure 6.14: Close-up of cabinet on countertop for mixer storage



Figure 6.15: Close-up of original countertop material



Figure 6.16: View of kitchen toward eat-in area



Figure 6.17: Close-up of built-in china cabinet in eat-in area of kitchen.
Built-in liquor cabinet is to the left of china cabinet.

Case Study 3: A 1950s Bungalow¹⁹⁵

This house, located on Glenwood Road in Hendersonville, North Carolina, is a typical post-war brick and frame sided house of average quality for the period. This house was custom built for Mr. and Mrs. Ellis L. Revis in 1953 at a cost of \$5,000.

The house originally consisted of a kitchen, pantry/laundry corridor, dining area, living area, central corridor, bathroom, bedroom one, and bedroom two. A separate structure housed the garage with room for a maid above and a storage area below.

Mr. and Mrs. Revis occupied the house until the late 1950s. The house has been through four additional owners between then and the present and has had several additions made. The kitchen has been altered, but the original appliance arrangement is still used.

The original kitchen had a set of average-quality, custom wood cabinets running along the exterior wall. Another set of cabinets was installed above the stove and above the refrigerator. The cabinetwork was painted with enamel paint. A double bowl porcelain drop-in sink was centered below the outside windows. To the right of the sink was located an electric hot water heater encased in porcelain enamel housing. The surface of the hot water heater was integrated to the height of the counters. The original stove was a 40" wide model with timed cooking options and a built-in, deep fat fryer. The original refrigerator was a Crosley with shelves in the door. The kitchen had a drop leaf table that served for dining in the kitchen. The flooring was asphalt tile.

A corridor provided access to the outside. This corridor served as a laundry room and pantry with a washing machine, enameled steel storage cabinet, and built-in cabinet that enclosed the garbage receptacle. Although there was room for both, neither a dryer nor a dishwasher was used in the original kitchen. Mrs. Revis employed full-time help, and live-in help after the birth

¹⁹⁵ Note: All facts cited are from an interview with Jeanne Huggins Revis taken in the house on December 13, 2008.

of her first child. She states that the idea of purchasing a dryer or dishwasher never occurred to her at that time because she had someone doing that work. Both the fact that Mrs. Revis kept a maid and that she chose not have a dishwasher or dryer conform to the information regarding the use of domestic help in the South during the period as well as support assertions about the impact the presence of domestic help had on the utilization of certain appliances.

The original kitchen in this house is more reflective of 1940s design than 1950s design. Little emphasis was placed on cabinet innovations or incorporating a large eat-in area into the kitchen. The counter set up follows the “L” shape design first proposed in the 1930s.

This kitchen is very important for several reasons. It serves to remind one that trends in domestic residences – as with all trends – do not begin and end on a specific date. Trends begin slowly, reach an apex and then gradually fade as other trends emerge. It is for this reason that one should be careful about making assumptions regarding older kitchens in the absence of an original owner’s description. This kitchen is also important in that it confirms certain assertions that have been made with regard to the regional use of domestic servants and their impact on the utilization of appliances. Case study #2 appears to refute this assertion; this particular case study supports the assertion. Clearly, further case studies on houses from this period would clarify the veracity of assertions regarding the continued use of servants in the South and their effects.

Subsequent remodeling to this house generally – and the kitchen specifically – resulted in the addition of a half-bath through what had originally been the back door. The window over the washing machine was converted to an exterior door. A passage door that formerly gave access from the kitchen to the bedroom corridor has been closed off and cabinets in a “U” shape run the entire perimeter of the room. The sink, stove, and refrigerator, however, occupy their original locations. A dishwasher has been added to the kitchen. The laundry area is still in the corridor.

The pantry functions formerly provided by the corridor have been compensated for with the doubling of the kitchen cabinet capacity.

The current owners do not know when the kitchen was last remodeled; the kitchen is as it was when they took possession two years ago. The current cabinetwork is a common quality cabinet – the prefabricated economy models found at large building supply stores. The natural oak finish implies that they are circa-1980. One must try to imagine what problems the persons were attempting to solve in that remodeling project. It is very clear that they felt the cabinet storage space was inadequate to the point that they were willing to sacrifice the space for an eat-in table and passageway to the bedrooms in favor of more cabinets. If this work was done in the 1980s, then the ideal of the 1980s – the open kitchen – was not achieved; perhaps it was not the goal.

It is very curious to observe that this kitchen is persistently running one trend behind the times. At the time of its construction in the 1950s, it was more reflective of the 1940s. At the time of its remodeling in the 1980s, it became more of a 1950s ideal. The removal of the wall between the dining area and the kitchen could have easily created an open kitchen arrangement.



Figure 6.18: Glenwood Road - facade



Figure 6.19: View of kitchen from laundry/pantry corridor –
Note: area to right of stove originally had passageway to
bedroom hall



Figure 6.20: View of kitchen from stove toward laundry/pantry corridor.
Note: no dishwasher was originally included.



Figure 6.21: View from dining area toward kitchen



Figure 6.22: View of kitchen toward sink from dining area door

Case Study 4: A 1930s Upper-income Winter Home¹⁹⁶

Bellefield House is one of two fine residences situated within an 18,000-acre estate on the coast of South Carolina. Sited within its own 14-acre park setting, the house is the center of a complex of buildings designed by architects Murgatroyd and Ogden in 1936 as the winter residence for Belle W. Baruch. The house was designed to provide a high level of comfort for its owner and hospitality to guests who visited for activities that revolved around hunting, fishing, and riding interspersed with excellent food and entertainment.

The house appears as originally constructed with one or two minor alterations. The quality of materials and construction is the best available. The mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems are state-of-the-art for the period and would be enviable today. Electrical service was originally supplied by an on-site generating plant.

The first floor of the house includes the entrance hall, living room, sunroom, dining room, butler's pantry, kitchen, kitchen pantry, service entrance hall, maid's room one, maid's room two, maids' bathroom, housekeeper's office, side (family) entrance hall, cloak room, powder room, guest room one (with full bath), and guest room two (with full bath). The second floor has a third guest room (with full bath), in addition to the owner's private sitting room, bedroom, and full bath.

The overall design of the house is representative of the type of house suggested for this purpose for this income group in magazines of the 1930s. It shows a movement away from the jaw-dropping winter homes that were preferred during the 1920s toward emphasis on good style, convenience, and modern comfort.

¹⁹⁶ Note: All facts cited are from a survey report made of the property by the author for the Belle W. Baruch Foundation during the summer of 2008.

The kitchen and supporting areas are also representative of the layouts suggested for this type of house. The house has but one dining room for the owner and guests. It is understood from research that the dining room was designed to have a small table for one or two people in the bay window that would serve when the owner was alone or with one other guest. The larger dining table in the center of the room was placed in service when the number of guests warranted it.

The butler's pantry separates the dining room from the kitchen, as was the custom. It is accessed through a swinging door from the dining room or from the family entrance hall. The butler's pantry also served as the cleanup and storage area for the dining room china and silver. The cabinetwork in this room conforms precisely to the architect's original drawings with the exception of a change in location for the refrigerator. The cabinetwork both in the pantry and in the kitchen is extremely high quality work that was executed by Curtis Woodwork, a nationally advertised company, from the 1920s through at least the 1950s. The original white oak countertops may be observed behind the more recent Formica sheet goods that were applied at some point in the 1960s.

The butler's pantry also contains a double-bowl sink with integrated drain boards to the left and right. This sink is made of Monel metal, an alloy that was much discussed in the 1930s as the preferred material for dishwashing areas. This sink was originally installed as a wall-mounted sink with no cabinets above or below. The area below the sink was enclosed at a later date and upper cabinets were added. The quality of workmanship on these cabinets is decidedly inferior to the original cabinetwork. Whereas the original cabinet system was assembled to furniture grade quality, these later cabinets consist of common plywood laid over a 2"x4" frame.

Directly off the butler's pantry, before arriving in the kitchen, is a room that the floor plan indicates as a "pressing room." This room was actually used as the housekeeper/cook's office during the early years of the house.

The kitchen is accessed from the butler's pantry through a swinging door. It is the first room in a single story wing that protrudes from the west side of the main block of the house and serves as the service wing and servants' quarters. The kitchen occupies the full width of the wing allowing for plenty of daylight and cross-ventilation. The cabinetwork is of the same high quality as the butler's pantry, and was manufactured by Curtis Woodwork according to the architect's specifications. The kitchen has full cabinetwork on two walls – the south and east. Of these two, the south wall cabinet system has Monel metal countertops with an integrated double-bowl sink. This counter was cut at some point to accommodate a dishwasher. It is thought that this occurred during the 1960s and at the same time as when the electric stove was installed.

The cabinet system on the east wall has white oak countertops and was designed to serve as a preparation area; the original white oak is currently covered with Formica. These cabinets were cut in the 1960s to make space for an electric stove. The north wall has cabinetwork of lesser quality that was added later. The center of this cabinet was created from the section cut out of the east cabinets. The west wall is occupied with a large coal/wood-burning range. This stove served throughout Belle Baruch's time in the house until her death in 1963; it is thought the electric range was added after her death.

This kitchen is also known to have contained a large central table that served both as a preparation surface and as a place where servants took their meals. Two servants' bedrooms, a servant's full bathroom, and the service entry for the kitchen are accessed through a door to the

right of the wood/coal range. A storage pantry is accessed through a door to the left of the range. This pantry is well ventilated with one exterior window. It contains the original shelving, including ventilated shelving with bins for storing fresh vegetables. The large, electric refrigerator that serviced the kitchen was located in this pantry.

The electrical plan for this kitchen area shows that the butler's pantry included one overhead light and one wall mounted light over the sink. In addition to this, the plan calls for three, two-gang outlets – two of which are indicated for electrical supply to the refrigerator. It is interesting to note that the pantry refrigerator finally went into a much more logical place than the architect had imagined. It is also interesting to note that an additional overhead light was added in the pantry, and that the original light was relocated. This was done during construction as the original switches are in place; the house has plaster walls and ceilings that would reveal any changes of this sort; and house has never been rewired. Furthermore, later additions to the electrical system are quite obvious. The butler's pantry also contains a 220v outlet of 1950s vintage that was installed to supply a window air-conditioning unit installed in the window to the right of the scullery sink.

The room used as the cook/housekeeper's office originally called for two, two-gang outlets, which are in place – and a single bulb overhead light – also in place. An alteration was made at the time of construction in which a door from the office directly to the family entrance hall was installed.

The kitchen was originally lighted by one central single-bulb fixture with one more single-bulb fixture over the sink. The central fixture has been replaced with fluorescent lighting. The kitchen originally included two, two-gang outlets. Two additional 110v outlets have been added over the years; one on the south wall that is thought to have been installed in the 1970s or

1980s to service a microwave oven, and another on the north wall that is thought to have been placed at the same time to service a television set. A television set was certainly on this counter at some point after the use of coaxial cable became available as a television cable terminates in this area. The kitchen is also the location for the annunciator box; that curious device that advised servants that they were needed and to which room they should go.

Bellefield House was built at a time when visual signals announced the different sections of the house. In Bellefield, extremely fine quality hand chased brass door hardware was used throughout the house, along with brass switch plate and outlet covers. The only exception to this is in the main block of the house, where bathrooms have door hardware and electrical plates that are chrome plated. Chrome finishing was used to avoid the consistent polishing that brass required in high humidity areas, such as bathrooms, in a time when forced air HVAC systems were not in general use. Chrome finished electrical plates and door hardware were also used in service areas of fine homes, but the purpose in this area was an acknowledgement of a lower place in the hierarchy of the house as a whole. In Bellefield's service wing, chrome plated hardware appears on all doors throughout. On doors that face the service wing on one side but the main house on the other, the hardware facing the main house is brass while the side facing the service wing is chrome plated. All original electrical plates in the service wing are chrome plated; later outlets and switches carry whatever material was prevalent at the time of installation.

Most interesting is the vintage 1940s 220v outlet that was retrofitted on the north wall to service a window air-conditioning unit. This is the oldest 220v outlet in the house. This, coupled with exterior photographs from the postwar 1940s that show an air-conditioner in place in this window, indicates that the first room in the house to be air-conditioned was the kitchen.

This area was reserved for servants at this time. It may therefore be stated that the servants' wing – or at least the kitchen – received air-conditioning before the residents' area.

The service pantry to the left of the range also had a two-gang 110v outlet that is marked on the plan for refrigerator service. The original – and indeed all subsequent – refrigeration was located in this pantry.

Following the instructions in Belle Baruch's will, a life tenancy was given to another woman, Ella Severin, who occupied the house until her death in 2000. By the mid-1960s, Bellefield no longer had a fulltime cook and Severin used the kitchen herself. It is thought that the electric range was added along with the Formica countertops at this time. Persons who knew Severin during the 1980s and 1990s observed that as she aged, she tended to spend more and more of her time in the kitchen, using it in much the same way a middle-income family used the open-kitchen/family room concept that had become the dominant design.

During Belle Baruch's lifetime, most of the food prepared at Bellefield House was grown on the estate. The only exception would have been staples such as coffee and sugar or luxury items ordered from New York such as pate and smoked salmon. The kitchen worked extremely well within what was essentially a nineteenth-century paradigm. Food was prepared when it was in season with additional quantities canned and preserved. Preserved foods were stored in one of the rooms in the cellar below the service wing. Access to the cellar was conveniently located in the butler's pantry. An unusual space in the coastal region, the cellar is still very dry and cool, no doubt the result of its 18"-thick brick walls and finished concrete floors. The cellar is partitioned into cells with 8"-thick brick walls in accordance with the architect's original design. A wide corridor that runs the full east-to-west length of the wing provides access to these rooms.

Beginning with the westernmost room, they were indicated for use as follows: wood storage (wood for the kitchen range and the house's eight fireplaces), coal storage (for use in the adjacent furnace and the kitchen range), boiler room (containing the furnace and hot water heater), general storage (came to be used as a trunk room), wine closet, and closet (which came to serve as a storage area for kitchen goods). An additional area was created by partitioning a room-sized niche at the foot of the stairs into a storage area for food that had been canned and preserved in the house. The fact a second area had to be created in order to handle stored food attests to the large quantity of food that was canned in the kitchen at Bellefield. It also provides an understanding into what it was like to work in the kitchen at Bellefield. The kitchen was responsible for providing food for the indoor help, the number of which varied with the number of guests, in addition to providing meals for the owner and her guests, while also preserving and preparing foods for future use. A cook at Bellefield also had to be conversant in cleaning and preparing the wild game that was often brought to the service entrance. Being the cook at Bellefield would have been challenging, particularly when the house was full, as it often was during the winter.

The fact that Belle Baruch kept a large number of servants from the 1930s through the 1950s ties in with the information given regarding the easier access to servants in the South than elsewhere during this period. At the time the house was built, there were five African-American villages on the estate, some of which had been occupied since the eighteenth century. Both Bellefield House and the neighboring Hobcaw House drew employees from these villages. Belle Baruch's cook, Francine McCant, came in daily from the Friendfield Village from the 1930s through a period that extended two or three years after Belle Baruch's death. Other servants, such as the laundry maid, came weekly. Housekeeping staff came daily from the village and

were supervised by Belle Baruch's household manager who was the most frequent occupant of one of the two maid's rooms. This sort of arrangement was very typical in this region where dozens of former working plantations had been purchased by wealthy northerners around the turn of the century and converted for use as winter hunting plantations. In addition to the appeal of economically-priced but enormously-proportioned properties that were well stocked with wildlife was the appeal of a built-in labor pool that was equally inexpensive to hire.

Belle Baruch was a single woman with a fortune at her disposal. Although she had been very involved in the political movement to secure women's voting rights, it is doubtful that she ever gave a thought to the steady evolution of the kitchen and any social implications it might have with regard to a woman's appropriate place. She is known to have been extremely involved, however, in every decision regarding the design of the house. The kitchen reflects its own time – 1936 – through the use of fine cabinetry, electric refrigeration, and general design ideas that provide for good cross-ventilation. It conspicuously avoids its own time through the choice of ranges. Although commercial-sized electric ranges were available, a prejudice existed against them in favor of gas ranges among the upper-income purchasers. It was felt that the nuances of good cooking were best achieved on a wood-fired range, and a gas range best replicated a wood-fired range. At the time Bellefield House was built, natural gas was not available at this remote location, so the decision was made to use a wood-burning range.

The kitchen, pantry, and attendant servants' rooms have a great deal of charm and style. It would not be an unpleasant place in which to work. Although there is no record of Belle Baruch's motives in accepting her architect's design for the spaces, the architect was clearly presenting the normal arrangement and level of finish for this type of house at this period. In areas of the country where it was more difficult to secure help, this sort of kitchen design was

thought to appeal to potential employees. It was spacious but efficient. The materials used were the best available. The fact that the owners would rarely see these features supports the assertion that some part of kitchen design considered its enticement to potential employees.

Although it is beyond the time range of this study, it is interesting to note the changes that occurred in this kitchen during the 1960s. The residents of the African-American villages located on the estate began to leave following World War II. During the war, local mills had begun to hire African-Americans to fill positions once restricted to white employees. This continued after the war, permitting former residents of the estate to purchase their own homes in Georgetown. Daily help, consisting of the cook, housemaid, and weekly laundry maid, continued to commute from Georgetown to the estate. The maids' rooms were only used when entertainments had gone on so late into the evening that it was a better use of time for the cook to sleep over in order to be on the job for early breakfast the next morning.

Following Belle Baruch's death, Ella Severin kept one live-in servant, a male servant, who lived in quarters at the garage formerly used by the chauffeur. Severin had weekly help that came in to do housekeeping, and used the male servant as a chauffeur in addition to running errands as needed and generally filling in on odd jobs about the immediate estate.

By the 1980s, no servants lived on the estate at all. Weekly cleaning help came in along with catering help when entertainment called for it. Otherwise, Severin prepared her own meals and spent most of her time in the kitchen. It was from this location that she managed her business and received most visitors. It is difficult to know if this situation is portraying a typical situation that reflects changing times or if it is merely a reflection of an aging woman who is becoming more circumspect in her approach to life. It is also difficult to know how Severin's

own background affected her use of the house. Ella Severin was neither born to great wealth nor trained to operate a large home.

Belle Baruch was born to wealth and household records indicate that she followed a very formal method of housekeeping as it had been taught to her by her mother. Records show that Belle Baruch had regularly scheduled meetings with her housekeeper to review the state of the china and household linens, make lists of items that could be repaired as opposed to items that required replacement. She also made periodic inspections of the house with her male workers with an eye toward maintenance. Her approach was very much typical of a class that believed in timely maintenance. Belle Baruch had left Ella Severin the resources to maintain the house. It may be that Severin was simply not raised to perform the task.



Figure 6.23: Bellefield House – ca. 2008

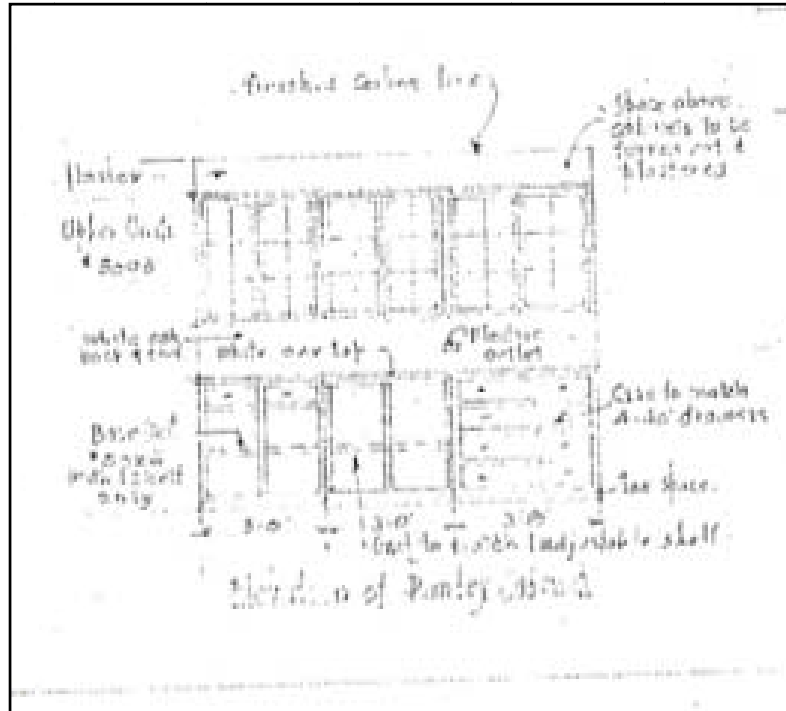


Figure 6.24: Architect's elevation for north wall of butler's pantry



Figure 6.25: Butler's pantry north cabinet as built by Curtis Woodwork. Note: Base cabinet was built as designed but, during installation, the left cabinet was dropped and the entire unit moved to the left to accommodate the pantry refrigerator. The wide drawers to the right are for flat linen storage



Figure 6.26: Monel metal sink in butler's pantry. This sink originally appeared as wall-mounted with no cabinetwork. The current cabinetwork is of low quality and was added at a later unknown date.



Figure 6.27: South wall of kitchen – original two-gang outlet with switch for the light over the sink with a chrome-plated cover to the right. The outlet to the left is ca. 1980 and was placed to service a microwave oven.



Figure 6.28: Typical chrome-plated outlet cover in the service wing



Figure 6.29: Typical chrome plated switch plate cover in the service wing



Figure 6.30: Kitchen north wall outlets. Neither of these is original. The one on the left is a 1950s era grounded outlet. The one to the right is a 1940s era 220 v. outlet that serviced the first window air-conditioner in the house.



Figure 6.31: Exterior view of the north wall of the service wing dated 1952. Window air-conditioning unit can be seen in the upper portion of the kitchen window.

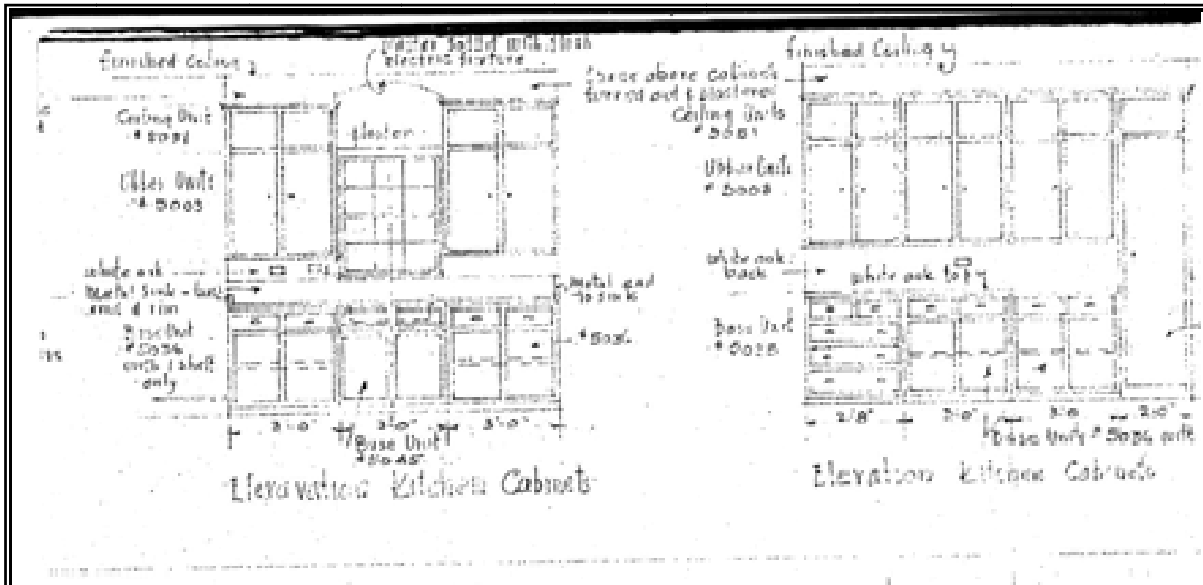


Figure 6.32: Architect's original drawing for the kitchen cabinet network on the south wall (left) and east wall (right)



Figure 6.33: Kitchen south wall cabinets as built by Curtis Woodwork. Features include Monel metal countertop, vent grill in doors below sink, and extremely fine chrome plate on brass cabinet hardware. The cut in the base cabinet to the left of the sink is from a 1960s era dishwasher installation.



Figure 6.34: Kitchen east wall cabinets as built by Curtis Woodwork. The cut for the stove was made at some point during the 1960s. The Formica on the counters and back splash cover the original white oak material.



Figure 6.35: North wall cabinet added sometime during the 1960s. The center portion is made from the section removed from the east wall base cabinet.



Figure 6.36: West wall of kitchen with original wood/coal burning range. The door to the right accesses the service entry and maids' accommodations beyond. The door to the left accesses the kitchen storage pantry where the refrigerator has always been located. The grill in the door was added as part of a 2003 HVAC retrofit.

Case Study 5: A Survey of House-Museums¹⁹⁷

A survey of house-museums was conducted in conjunction with the Office of Research Services at the University of Georgia in which twelve of the eighty-two museums contacted provided a response. The questionnaire was directed toward house-museums that have twentieth century kitchens. Of the twelve respondents, eleven represent house-museums that include a kitchen. Of the eleven extant kitchens, seven have been remodeled with the work having been done as early as 1940 and as late as 1978.

Nine of the twelve house-museums present the kitchens as part of their interpretation. This is, however, a relatively recent innovation in most cases as revealed in the answers to Question #22 “How Did You Decide to Use Your Secondary Areas in Your Interpretation?” The John F. Kennedy birthplace began interpreting the kitchen in 2002. Fallingwater has ceased using the kitchen area for offices and has restored the space that, although not open on the general tours, is made available during in-depth or specialized tours.

The inclusion of the kitchen on house tours has provided a variety of expanded opportunities. Chief among these is the opportunity to discuss the lives and activities of servants. Following this, the kitchens are used to provide a deeper insight into the lives of the people who occupied the houses. In some cases, the ability to include the kitchen has required expanding the mission of the museum while in others it has been a natural extension of the existing mission of interpreting the lives of the occupants. In one case, the house-museum is responding to a 2006 site review that directly encouraged the staff to include more interpretive material about the household division of labor.

Visitor response to having access to the kitchens has been positive. Among the comments made by visitors is the idea that viewing the kitchen and service areas makes the

¹⁹⁷ See Appendix for full record of survey.

house seem “real.” One house-museum has photographs of the original owner at work in the kitchen that visitors have found useful for understanding how the kitchen was used on a daily basis. One interpreter observed that visitor reaction leads her to believe that “the kitchens, bathrooms, and other similar areas help visitors connect to our story in ways that they don’t so much in rooms filled with furniture that belonged to Marie Antoinette and Faberge eggs that belonged to the last Romanoffs.”¹⁹⁸

The survey supports the idea that kitchens have a unique ability to provide a humanizing effect. A house may be extremely grand in scale, or associated with historical events that are distant in time, but the kitchen can provide a common ground that is easily understood and which can provide a common point for comparison with ones own house and lifestyle. Having this point of comparison can make a house seem less foreign.

The fact that many of these houses discuss the roles of servants is extremely important. This is a class of person whose lives are otherwise overlooked in social history. There is very little opportunity for contemporary people to contemplate the lives of the working classes and their contributions. House-museum kitchen interpretation is a good way to bridge this gap.

¹⁹⁸ Quote taken from respondent to the survey, See Appendix “Survey Form” on page 166. “Survey Form”, Question 24, Answer 18.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The accelerated evolution of the kitchen that occurred in the first half of the twentieth century reflects technological improvements and innovations coupled with societal changes including a decline in the availability of servants and an increase in the influence of women. As a result, the kitchen can be viewed as a valuable resource for information regarding women's studies, African-American history, and the study of material culture.

This thesis has demonstrated that a methodical approach to actual kitchens as historical resources can lend clarity to assertions made by historians and sociologists. It has supported some arguments and refuted others. Every effort has been made to avoid the pitfall of having too many broad generalizations by staying aware of the fact that the historic evolution of kitchens in the twentieth century involves trends that did not arrive and fade on specific dates. Therefore, while it is possible to discuss a typical 1940s kitchen, for example, the author does not deny that somewhere a room with a distinctly 1940s feel exists that was actually a product of the 1930s. Conversely, it is understood that the ideals of a 1940s kitchen continued to be built well into the 1960s simply because some homeowners found that particular arrangement to be better suited to their needs.

This thesis has proposed that familiarity with the key features of kitchens can be grouped according to an arrangement of progressive periods. It has viewed two classes of kitchens: middle-income kitchens in urban or suburban settings; and kitchens found in upper-income

homes in order to take advantage of those kitchens with the best and earliest access to new innovations.

There are myriad opportunities for expanding this study. It could be approached regionally, or a comparison study could be performed on strictly rural kitchens. A study could be conducted to compare and contrast the kitchens available to affluent agricultural families with those found in urban settings for similar income groups.

The centerpiece to further research is an ongoing commitment to gathering case studies, particularly those where someone is available who is familiar with the original kitchen or with changes that have been made over time. The most revealing information in this thesis came from face to face interviews with people whose longevity and reliable memory allowed them to answer otherwise unanswerable questions about why a particular appliance was or was not purchased, or if there was a particular purpose for an arrangement in a specific kitchen. In the absence of first person interviews, one must rely on educated guesses. It stands to reason that the more first person information that is collected, the better the basis for making an educated guess.

The survey of house museums that was conducted in conjunction with this thesis revealed a pleasant surprise; there is a strong trend toward opening and interpreting kitchens to visitors. Fallingwater, for example, now includes the kitchen with the original St. Charles cabinets and an AGA stove of the same period as the original. The staff at the John F. Kennedy birthplace in Boston is moving toward kitchen interpretation in as much as is permitted by the constrictions of their charter. In many cases, respondents to the survey reported that their visiting public expresses high interest and approval of the ability to visit the kitchens. This is, of course, an interest that was observed nearly a century ago. As noted in the introduction, the Telfair House

Museum in Savannah Georgia generated a great deal of interest when they opened their kitchens to the public in 1930.

The last point of resistance to acknowledging the value of kitchens may actually lie in official historic preservation itself. The emergence of new preservation ideologies such as the Values Centered approach proposed by Randall Mason is very encouraging. Interior secondary spaces generally – and kitchens specifically – respond very well to this type of assessment and analysis providing information that is beneficial to an extremely broad range of stakeholders. The average household kitchen, then, shares a great deal with the kitchen as an academic resource; in both instances it is the place where everyone is welcome and where everyone wants to be.

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APPENDIX
SURVEY FORM

Table 1

Kitchen Areas

	n	%
House Museum Have Kitchen Area:		
Yes	11	91.7
No	1	8.3
TOTAL	12	100.0
House Museum Ever Have Kitchen Area:		
Yes	1	100.0
No	0	0.0
TOTAL	1	100.0
Kitchen Area Original to House:		
Yes	11	91.7
No	1	8.3
TOTAL	12	100.0
Any of Original Kitchen Exist:		
Yes	11	91.7
No	1	8.3
TOTAL	12	100.0
Kitchen Area Been Remodeled:		
Yes	7	58.3
No	5	41.7
TOTAL	12	100.0
Remodeled Completely or Partially:		
Completely	2	28.6

Partially	5	71.4
TOTAL	7	100.0

Year Remodeled:

1940, 1952, 1955, 1962, 1967, 1977, 1978

Table 2
Pantry Areas

	n	%
House Museum Have Pantry Area:		
Yes	7	58.3
No	5	41.7
TOTAL	12	100.0
What Happened to Original Pantry Area:		
Eliminated During Renovation	1	25.0
Other	3	75.0
TOTAL	1	100.0
Paint Analysis Performed at House:		
Yes	7	63.6
No	4	36.4
TOTAL	11	100.0

Table 3

Interpretation, Funding, and Staff

	n	%
House Museum on National Register of Historic Places:		
Yes	11	91.7
No	1	8.3
TOTAL	12	100.0
House Museum Use Secondary Areas in Interpretation:		
Yes	9	90.0
No	1	10.0
TOTAL	10	100.0
Primary Funding Source for House Museum:		
Endowed Foundation	5	50.0
Regular Government Funding	2	20.0
Other/Combination	3	30.0
TOTAL	10	100.0
Number of Staff Members at House Museum:		
10 or less	3	33.3
11 – 20	1	11.1
21 – 40	2	22.2
41 +	3	33.3
TOTAL	9	99.9
Mean Staff Members = 41.6		
Number Paid Staff Members:		
10 or less	5	50.0
11 – 20	1	10.0
21 – 40	2	20.0
41+	2	20.0
TOTAL	10	100.0

Mean Paid Staff Members = 28.9

Number Volunteer Staff Members:

0	5	50.0
1 – 10	2	20.0
11 – 20	0	0.0
21 – 40	1	10.0
41 +	2	20.0

Mean Volunteer Staff Members = 51.7

Table 4

Interpretation, Funding, and Staff

	n	%
Kitchen Contain Original Appliances:		
Yes	5	45.5
No	6	54.5
TOTAL	11	100.0
Kitchen Contain Any Original Plumbing:		
Yes	7	63.6
No	4	36.4
TOTAL	11	100.0
Kitchen Contain Any Original Cabinetry:		
Yes	8	72.7
No	3	27.3
TOTAL	11	100.0
Pantry Area Original to House:		
Yes	7	100.0
No	0	0.0
TOTAL	7	100.0
Any of Original Pantry Area Exist:		
Yes	7	100.0
No	0	0.0
TOTAL	7	100.0
Pantry Area Been Remodeled:		
Yes	2	28.6
No	5	71.4
TOTAL	7	100.0

Q1 – In Which State is Your House Museum Located?

California
Georgia
Hawaii
Kentucky
Louisiana
Maryland
Massachusetts
Mississippi
New Hampshire
New York
Pennsylvania
Texas
Vermont
Virginia
Washington, DC

Q2 – What Year Was Your House Constructed?

1745
1849
1857
1865
1905
1906
1908
1920
1925
1927
1928
1936
1942
1950

Q6 – What Happened to the Original Kitchen Area in Your House Museum? (“Other”)

9 Removed to add a changing exhibit space by our founder

Q10 – What Year was the Kitchen Area Remodeled?

1940
1952
1955
1962
1967
1977

1978

Q12 – What Happened to the Original Pantry Area in Your House Museum? (“Other”)

- 7 Not part of original design (cabinets within kitchen)
- 12 Servant's dining room but not a pantry
- 16 never had one

Q16 – What Year was the Pantry Area Remodeled?

1952

1955

Q22 – How Did You Decide to Use Your Secondary Areas in Your Interpretation?

- 5 As a ranch we decided to show some of the older kitchen dishes and cook ware that would have been used for feeding the cowboys, etc. We also have dishes that carry the 'Rose' theme and that was the lady of the house's maiden name.
- 7 The original interpretive plan was presented by the donor, Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy. Mrs. Kennedy described kitchen activities in a taped narrative, but neglected to mention the household staff. The interpretive supervisor introduced contextual information (including biographical details about the staff) into guided tours (in addition to Mrs. Kennedy's narrative) in 2002.
- 9 When the main kitchen was removed to make way for a changing exhibit space the idea was all homes have kitchens and people know what they looked like. Overtime visitors complain about the lack of a kitchen (possibly looking for familiarity) so our docents began showing the pantry/upstairs kitchenette. We have fun convinces [sic] like dumb waiters which connected the main kitchen on the first floor to the kitchenette on the second floor. Showing this area allows us to discuss events held in house.
- 11 Household management is one of our interpretive themes.
- 12 Our historic house is currently under restoration. We use the kitchen area to talk about what happened to the house during its period of abandonment, what the kitchen looked like during our year of significance (1907) and how we will restore the kitchen.
- 13 The transition of the kitchen from a utilitarian space to a museum space has been gradual. However, formal policies have been implemented over the past two years to transform this space into an interpreted museum space. The kitchen and basement areas are not on regular tours; however, visitors may take an in-depth or focus tour to see these spaces.
- 15 Interpretation of service spaces and the lives and lifestyles of family servants from 1906-1950.
- 16 They are integral to the floor plan so visitors must pass through them. It is a small house so all spaces are needed to accommodate tours.
- 18 Because our founder tasked us to interpret both her collections and her lifestyle.

Q23 – What is the primary reason you decided not to use your secondary areas in your interpretation?

All original areas are gone.

Q24 – Please provide any other information you would like regarding use of your secondary areas in your interpretation?

- 5 Another theme we stress is how people reused and refashioned implements over the years.
- 7 An OAH site review in 2006 encouraged site staff to include more interpretive material about the household division of labor.
- 9 Showing our kitchenette area allows us to introduce the idea of the parties that had to be fed and then allows for discussion of the types of parties which helped raise money for schools, artists, and political ideas believed in by the home owners. It also makes the family seem more like everyone else in that anyone might want some milk in the middle of the night right down the hall.
- 11 The butler's pantry is a pass-through area.
- 13 The Fallingwater kitchen has been restored. It contains its original St. Charles metal cabinets, a work table designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, restored Cherokee red asphalt tile floor, AGA stove (period but not original to the house), original 1950's Frigidaire refrigerator, and original 1940's KitchenAid. The basement pantry contains original metal storage cabinets and servants' lockers.
- 16 In addition to original appliances (one was replaced by the original owner but the museum was able to locate the exact model and reintroduce the original model into the kitchen) all of the original cooking utensils, pots, pans, glass ware and table ware are in the kitchen and dining area.
- 18 Visitors are forever commenting on the kitchen and other service areas that make this place 'real.' My interpretation of those comments is that the kitchen, bathrooms, and other similar areas help visitors connect to our story in ways that they don't so much in rooms filled with furniture that belonged to Marie Antoinette and Faberge eggs that belonged to the last Romanoffs.

Q25 – What is the primary source of funding for your House Museum? (“Other”)

- 9 All of the above minus regular gov. funding
- 12 Fund-raising for current restoration, tour revenue, programming, membership, annual fund, grants
- 13 tour revenue, shop and cafe sales, grants

Q32 – Please Feel Free to Comment Below on any Aspect of Your House Museum Related to Secondary Areas.

- 7 The interpretive staff is attempting to introduce additional materials and to more fully utilize the secondary areas of the museum, but is required to honor the integrity of Mrs. Kennedy's gift to the National Park Service.
- 9 The time period and construction of the home created secondary spaces both utilitarian and extravagant. Our basement was built for the HVAC and laundry as well as a wine cellar and photo dark room. Built during the WWII there are many features of engineering and architectural interest which are only fully understood by integrating the entire home in the

interpretation and helps to attract a wider audience. If Wedgwood is not interesting the automated bay window in the dining room might be.

- 12 We have a servant's dining room off the kitchen and two servant's bedrooms on the second floor which we hope to interpret as part of our restoration.
- 16 We have photographs of the original owner working in the kitchen - visitors find it interesting to see how the space was used on a daily basis.
- 18 In addition to our founder's interest in sharing her 'lifestyle' with museum visitors, the current staff is deeply committed to domestic service interpretation. We honor peoples' curiosities about how places like ours 'worked' and share stories of the experiences of service staff right alongside stories of our founder and her circle. Personally, my graduate work centered on domestic service interpretation and it is my delight to bring our service stories to the fore. As a site of recent history

Q33 – Could You Please Supply Us With Your Mission Statement?

- 5 The Anna Ranch Heritage Center is dedicated to preserving, interpreting and perpetuating ranching culture and the legacy and contributions of Anna Lindsey Perry-Fiske and her family to the history of Waimea.
- 6 Agecroft Association's mission is to serve as: • A source for enjoyment, education and cultural activity for the general public. • A unique educational center for the specializing in the studies for British Renaissance 1485-1660.
- 7 Park Purpose As a gift from Rose Kennedy to the people of the United States, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site preserves and interprets the birthplace and first home of the 35th president of the United States Park Significance John F. Kennedy NHS is the birthplace and childhood home of the 35th president of the United States. It was here, in the first home shared by the future president's parents, that Joseph and Rose Kennedy cultivated and instilled in their son the family's principles, skills, aspirations, and ambitions. Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy carefully crafted a re-creation of the home's interior as a gift to the American people in the aftermath of the president's assassination.
- 9 To preserve and use the historical and artistic legacy of Longue Vue and its creators to educate and inspire people to pursue beauty and civic responsibility in their lives.
- 11 The Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum interprets the diverse history of southern California and the Workman and Temple families from 1830-1930 in order to foster an understanding of how history impacts our lives. (Management Team currently is drafting a revised mission statement.)
- 12 The Martin House Restoration Corporation is dedicated to restoring Frank Lloyd Wright's greatest 'prairie house,' the six-structure Darwin Martin House complex, built 1904-05 in the great city of Buffalo, New York, to run it efficiently, market it effectively.
- 13 Fallingwater preserves Frank Lloyd Wright's masterpiece, conserves the site for which it was designed, and interprets them and their history for present and future generations of the world community. In pursuing its work, Fallingwater demonstrates leadership and creativity, engages the public, and celebrates the power of design in harmony with nature. Its approach is collaborative and it meets the highest recognized standards of museum and preservation practices
- 15 The purpose of the McFaddin-Ward House Museum is to preserve and interpret the McFaddin-Ward House, its collections, and the history of the family associated with it; to interpret the history of Southeast Texas, including its architecture, material and aesthetic

culture, agricultural and business interests, especially as they relate to the house, its collection, and the family, through tours, educational programs, publications, and exhibits; and to cooperate with community groups involved with the promotion of historical and cultural activities, tourism, and education.

16 I can't paste it in here - I'll send under separate email paspahr@currier.org 603-669-6144

18 Hillwood Museum & Gardens' mission is to enlighten and engage visitors with an experience inspired by founder Marjorie Merriweather Post's passion for excellence, gracious hospitality, and intent to preserve and share the beauty and history of her collections, gardens, and estate.