

(Ray Happe was the son of our Aunt Therese Strobel and Edward Happe. I remember him as round-faced with twinkling eyes a bachelor, but definitely a ladies man.)

Morning Assignment by Joe Aaron
(about 1970 in the Evansville Courier, Indiana)

A 'Happe' Dream Comes True

When Raymond Happe began building a new house on his farm near Mt. Vernon, Ind., about three years ago, he knew exactly what he wanted.

He wanted something different.

And after touring the almost-completed structure the other day, I can personally swear that he got what he wanted, with compound interest.

It's no typical farmhouse, on that you can make book. It doesn't even come close.

It's — well, I don't know what it is, to tell you the truth. And even Happe, who designed it, doesn't know.

"For years," he said, "I'd go through magazines looking at house plans, taking what I liked from each of them.

"**AND THIS,**" he said, waving vaguely at the looming structure before us, "is what I came up with."

What he came up with is, to begin with, huge — and huger yet when you consider that Happe is a bachelor, with all of that room to himself.

The living room alone is 18 by 30 feet, with a brick hearth that extends across the length of one end, and the roof, of s h a k e r shingles, is high enough to accommodate three floors.

The entire ground floor, except for the bathroom and Happe's office, is wide open space, without one interior wall, and an ordinary floor lamp at the end of the fireplace will light one's way throughout the house, both upstairs and down — which will be handy, of course, if he has to get up during the night to let the cat out or something.

OF PARTICULAR interest are the half-dozen kinds of native lumber — all of them grown in that immediate area — used in the construction.

The living room floor is of poplar, grown on his grandfather's farm and cut and stored in a barn 20 years ago.

The office floor is sassafras, the bathroom walls are honey cherry, the bedrooms are of walnut, the kitchen walls are rough cottonwood — and the walls of Happe's office are the •impainted, weathered, knotty planks from an old barn. It sounds pretty awful but looks great. I wish I had a den just like it.

BRICKS USED in the building, and in the enormous patio that practically surrounds it, are from the old St. Mary's Hospital, which was torn down, good grief, how many years ago?

Happe bought them and saved them against the day when he would build.

And the entrance lights to his new home once lit the way into the old police station in Evansville.

Even more unusual than the building itself, probably, are the furnishings it will contain, most of it acquired by Miss I. J. Dart, interior decorator of New Harmony, Ind.

NOT A STICK if it, if you don't count the kitchen stove and sink, is contemporary. Some of it dates back a century and a half—and much of it has a story attached.

There is for example, the sleigh bed — a narrow, severe-looking thing — on which"-Happe's great-grandmother died.

And a handsome cabinet made by the original settlers of Black Township, in which Happe's 400-acre farm is located.

And a sturdy table made by the Rappites of old New Harmony.

AND OLD MUZZLE loaders, and an ox yoke, and antique light fixtures, and burnished cooper kettles, and heavy dishes that date back to the Civil War.

And the lavatories in the two bathrooms are the square, n o - n o n s e n s e kind favored some years ago in barbershops.

In the basement, complete with leaded glass and all, is a 150-year-old bar that once served as the business end of a West Side tavern.

Heck, there is even one chair, a true antique that required a great deal of revivification before it could be put on display, that Miss Dart fished from the city dump.

It is, all in all, a fascinating house, filled with fascinating objects from the past, and when you stand in the middle of the living room and glance around, it almost seems that you stubbed your toe and fell, and came up in an earlier century.

Except, of course, for the individual thermostats in every room to control the electric heat.

THAT couldn't be anything but gen-u-wine 20th Century.

