

The back-porch--already partly closed in at the north end by the coal-house--was completely screened, in and also covered by throwing a roof from the one-story rear area of the residence across to the roof of "the shop." (The date of these improvements is fixed in my mind by the circumstance that I was assisting the carpenters in putting up the roof when my mother came out with news of the death of resident Harding, which occurred on Aug. 2, 1923.)

What had formerly been the kitchen now became a separate dining-room and the former livingroom-diningroom became simply a living-room.

For the first time in my experience, living in this house became reasonably comfortable. Saturday-night baths no longer had to be taken in a wash-tub in the middle of the kitchen floor; "calls of nature" in a wintry night no longer had to be either resisted, satisfied by throwing an overcoat over a night shirt, slipping into shoes, lighting a lantern, and stumbling down a snowy path to an otherwise unheated "little house," or, in dire emergency, employing the receptacle to be found under the bed--although this last alternative was looked upon as really acceptable only in case of illness; dressing and undressing, also, need no longer be performed in a freezing or near-freezing temperature or, in the case of small children, in a corner of the kitchen. Nevertheless, inconveniences which today would be regarded as completely unacceptable hardships, still remained. Not only most members of the family but also "roomers," of whom we seem always to have had a few, could reach the bathroom only by passing through the dining-room and kitchen, and some of them, consequently, preferred to satisfy their more elemental needs through the continued use of the "little house"--until the city council declared the continuance of these edifices strictly illegal, which, however, was probably not before 1926. (Another inconvenience which these improvements eliminated was the necessity of performing one's ablutions either at the kitchen sink or, in the case of roomers, probably by use of a bowl-and-pitcher arrangement on a wash stand.)

A minor improvement made possible by inside plumbing and running water was instituted primarily for the benefit of two of our lodgers--Lela Gillespie, an attractive and popular college student, and her mother--who wished to use our upstairs front room for light-housekeeping, as it was called. In order to make this possible, a wash-bowl was installed in the upstairs hall-closet and was used both for ablutions and for washing dishes, after the latter had been carefully scraped and then wiped off with paper to prevent food particles from clogging the drain. The Gillespies probably cooked either on electric hot-plates or on a small oil-stove.

No major additions took place, to my recollection, for a dozen years after the 1923 "modernization," although, since I was rarely in Sterling, after 1926, except for brief periods, usually in the summer, I was not closely in touch with what went on in connection with the property. Sometime--perhaps in the 1930s, certainly by 1938--natural gas came to Sterling and the little Arcola furnace was altered to burn gas rather than wood and coal; gas-heaters were also installed in the upstairs bedroom, which for the first time became really comfortable in the winter.

The next great expansion was the result of a combination of factors. The Great Depression seriously affected the Porter income from their studio, never very adequate, but, fortunately, an oil boom developed near Sterling and it occurred to the Porters that, instead of renting sleeping-rooms to students for a meagre pittance, as aforesaid, they might make a substantial addition to their income by turning some of their space into apartments for rental to oil-field workers. Since in 1935 only one of their sons was at