

Terrace revisited

Continued from Page 1

formed at the Meadow Brook Music Festival.

Former president Donald O'Dowd also used the home for entertaining from 1970 to '74 and it became the official residence for university presidents in 1974.

"Matilda Dodge Wilson never liked the house," explained Fields, owner of P.K. Fields Interiors in Farmington. "It was too contemporary for her."

Styled after the prairie homes designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, Sunset Terrace uses glass extensively to incorporate the surrounding country environment as part of the interior living experience.

PERHAPS THE most striking feature of the mansion is its curvilinear design with winding cavernous foyers leading to spacious rooms illuminated by large windows. The foyers' brick walls have been stripped of paint and restored to a natural surface in keeping with the original design.

There are two original pieces in the front hallway — cabinets lined with jade and ivory statues which the Wilsons undoubtedly collected during their travels to the Orient.

The large circular living room (60 feet in diameter) has remained unchanged, except for the carpeting — which was trimmed to expose the slate that rings the room. The Wilsons probably would have placed a custom-made semi-circular section sofa in the living room, rather than the store-bought one selected by the interior designers.

They may have chosen a banquet table with a palm tree for accent, according to Sappington.

A TENNESSEE marble fireplace with brass trimmings and cove lighting are other distinguishing features in this spacious room. Chinese folding chairs add the Oriental touch, a popular trademark of the '50s.

The dining room — in the shape of a large horseshoe — also is illuminated by cove lighting. A 5-foot tall silver bud vase accents the elegant room, designed for small dinner parties.

The kitchen — intended for commercial use — has been wallpapered with a mustard-yellow and green vegetable design. "They had campy, cutesy coverings in those days," commented Fields.

Pink and grey were popular bathroom colors back then. A French powder room with floral wallpaper is situated adjacent to a cozy kitchen nook.

For the den, the designers found a vintage 1950s RCA Victor television set in blonde mahogany. A Scandinavian teakwood desk, beige couch and leather Eames chair and ottoman lend a comfortable, lived-in look to the room.

THE BAR AREA is papered with an authentic, typically tacky 1950s design. The names and recipes of cocktails are inscribed in bright, glow-in-the-dark lettering and emblazoned on a black background.

Alfred's original fish-shaped lamp rests on a blonde maple, kidney-shaped desk in his bedroom. "The lamp was at Meadow Brook Hall, but it never really fit in there," said Marilyn Brooks, director of special projects at the hall. "It looks just wonderful here."

Images of the Wilsons' favorite pets, prize-winning horses and their airplane Blue Bird, are etched in glass panels along a circular brushed-aluminum staircase.

"Mrs. Wilson liked work horses," recalled Brooks, whose mother was a good friend of the millionairess. (Mrs. Wilson was international president of the Women's Synodical of the Presbyterian Church and Brooks' mother was secretary.)

"Firestone was the most famous Belgian horse in the world," she added.

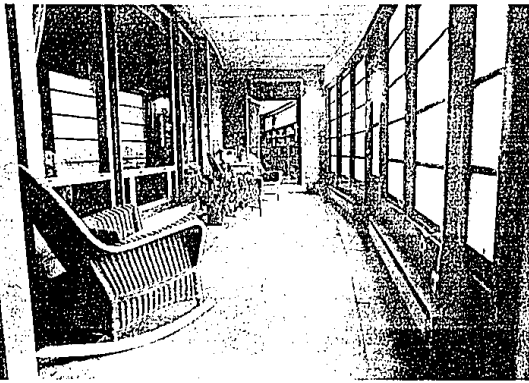
MATILDA'S FRILLY French-style bedroom furniture — except for the bed — was moved from Meadow Brook Hall for the temporary exhibit at Sunset Terrace.

Her bathroom retains the original jade green and purple wallpaper, the mirrored cabinets and monogrammed hand towels.

Mannequins, patterns and fabrics are strewn in the sewing room (which OU President Joseph Champagne used as an office) upstairs. The large library downstairs is lined with bookshelves and adorned with a bronze statue and a globe. (It had been a bedroom for one of Champagne's three children.)

Changing everything around required a lot of leg work on the committee's part, noted Soma Yavruian of Detroit, chairperson. "Everybody had to pitch in physically," she said.

For example, when the sofa didn't arrive on time, Fields had to get a truck and pick it up herself.



This porch leads from Alfred Wilson's bedroom to the library. Wicker chairs would have allowed residents to relax and enjoy the beautiful view. Although Alfred Wilson used the library for his study, Oakland University President Joseph E. Champagne converted it into a bedroom for one of his three children.

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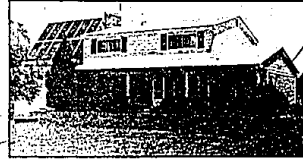
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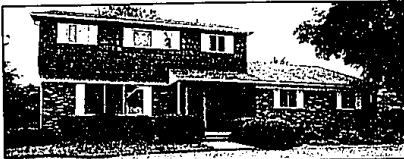
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