

Our cover design is a picture of the unusual house on Cameron Road which was converted from a barn into a home by the late Mr. Carl B. Harper and his wife. Mr. Harper died in December 1964.

Legend has it that when George Washington attended services at the nearby Falls Church Episcopal Church, where he was a Vestryman, he stabled his horse in the barn on one of the farms of his close friend and contemporary, George Mason. (Greenway Downs was once one of these farms.) Mr. and Mrs. Harper purchased the barn of this former farm in January 1934. They set about remodeling it into a home and as soon as barely habitable, they moved into it in May 1934. The barn was covered with stone cut from the quarry which is in front of the Falls Church Motel. This stone is known as Falls Church pink granite. The original walls of the barn are now the inside walls of the house. The boards are Norway pine brought from Europe in Colonial days, probably as ballast for the sailing ships. The boards are 12 inches wide and 1 inch thick. The old barn was held together by wooden pegs, except for handmade nails used in the roofing. In redoing the barn, matching wood was used throughout--using boards from other old buildings including a tobacco barn. The tile roof came from a dismantled mansion in Washington. There is no plaster or wallpaper in the house.

The house has many unusual features that are the product of Mr. Harper's inventive genius. He supervised the unique construction of the remodeling job. The downstairs area, where horses and cows were once kept, still has the old wooden pegs on which harnesses were hung. This is now the recreation room, garage, and storage area. The haymow is the second floor living rooms and the upper part of the haymow has been transformed into a third floor for bedrooms. The huge door that originally allowed wagons to be driven into the barn has been closed. The living room has an immense fireplace with a huge 12-foot chimney of flagstone which Mr. Harper built. Behind the fireplace is a secret stairway, the door of which is made of stone and concrete in a steel frame so delicately balanced it will open with a very light touch. The marble steps lead down to the recreation room. The third-floor bedrooms are reached from the living room by an unusual drawbridge stairway which originally could be raised or lowered. The swinging balcony over the living room is copied from a French chateau and is made of wood.

Mr. Harper was an MIT graduate with degrees in aeronautical engineering. He was retired from active duty in the U.S. Navy in 1930 due to injuries in line of duty. He designed the Navy catapult and the Navy flying boat equipped with hydrovanes. He flight tested the plane for Charles Lindberg's first trans-Atlantic flight and taught Amelia Earhart how to fly twin-engine aircraft. He was one of the country's top men in the aeronautical field, a designer, constructor and test pilot, and was a former chief engineer at the Naval Aircraft Factory at Philadelphia. His many inventions he gave to the U.S. Government.

A tour of the barn he remodeled into a house stands as a tribute to the man. Every part of the house gives proof of his inventive mind--a Franklin stove burns with a gas log, doors use wooden dowels for door knobs, bedroom doors slide up and down instead of out, a window cuts through the chimney on the west end of the house. All this and maybe George Washington's horse slept here!