

Grace Episcopal Church
St. Francisville, LA
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Grace Episcopal Church

Grace Episcopal Church in St. Francisville, West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana is one of the oldest Protestant churches in Louisiana. It began in 1827, and Investiture came in 1829 with Bishop Polk's visitation. The church was originally completed in 1860 including the installation of the organ, but was severely damaged by cannon fire from Union gunboats in the Mississippi River nearby during the Civil War. Charles Nevitt Gibbons is credited as the Architect. The church was rebuilt to its current state in 1893. Grace Episcopal Church was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

The church is of Gothic Revival style, brick masonry and heavy timber structure, with interior plaster finishes. It is iconic of the Gothic Revival and Episcopal churches. It sits in a nine acre site full of live oaks and other southern flora that embellish a magnificent graveyard.

Notable burials in the graveyard include: Robert Hilliard Barrow, four star U.S Marine Corps General; John Bennet Dawson, 19th Century Louisiana Congressman; John Elliott Hart, Union

Navy officer that died nearby on the Mississippi River whose 1863 funeral has been commemorated since 1999, with a festival, "The Day the War Stopped"; Junius Wallace Jones, Major General, U.S Air Force; Samuel Lawrason, state senator, author of the Lawrason Act of 1898; William Walter Leake, Confederate cavalry officer, who facilitated the Masonic burial of John E. Hart mentioned above, later a state senator, circuit court judge, and newspaper publisher; and George Matthews, Jr., presiding Judge of the Louisiana Supreme Court, 1813-1836.

St. Francisville lies north northwest of Baton Rouge across the Mississippi River from New Roads, LA. It is in the midst of numerous 19th Century historic properties such as The Rosedown Plantation, The Cottage Plantation, The Myrtles Plantation, Butler Greenwood Plantation, Catalpa Plantation, the Kent Plantation, Greenwood Plantation, and the Barrow House. There are also great restaurants in downtown St. Francisville worth visiting.

Ladd P. Ehlinger, AIA

HVAC & Historic Properties

There are always unforeseen issues that arise when historic properties are air conditioned (mechanically cooled). The primary issue is vapor drive. Vapor drive is the phenomena where water vapor moves through the pores of materials from warm and moist conditions of the air or ground toward cool and dry conditions within the building, where it seeks to condense at whatever the dew point is. Sometimes the dew point actually is within the material itself, which causes free water where one does not want it, due to the propensity for it to cause fungus blooms of two types: wood rot and mold (mildew). A secondary issue is rising damp in masonry walls that are founded on pyramidal brick footings directly in the wet soil. The drying of the masonry on the interior causes ground water to capillary into the masonry and dissolve the salts that are contained in both the masonry units and the mortar, and as the water migrates upward within the wall to where it evaporates to the interior, creates unsightly efflorescence (salt blooms) on the surface of the masonry in the areas of evaporation.

One can see this phenomenon in historic raised houses that have been air-conditioned when there is no vapor barrier and insulation under the raised first floor. The condensed water within the floor assembly causes the hardwood floors to "cup" (become crescent shaped in cross section), and a musty smell to emanate, which is mold. This condition will actually cause the wood floors, decks and floor joists to rot, and cause mold to grow within the cavities of the wood stud walls of the house due to the intercommunicating holes for wiring and plumbing. The varnish on the wood floors acts as a vapor barrier on the wrong side of the assembly.

Next issue: what to do to prevent these issues from developing.

Ladd P. Ehlinger, AIA

Rethinking Kitchen Design

The kitchen, arguably, is the most important room in a house. These days, more meals are eaten directly in the kitchen, and more family and friend socialization now occurs in the kitchen than in any other room in the house.

Yet, the basic design for kitchens has remained relatively unchanged, and is dominated by the placement of the three major appliances: sink, refrigerator/freezer, and stovetop/oven. In fact, there is a design method called the 'work triangle' that helps guide kitchen design layouts, for optimal usage.

This design method, while perfectly satisfactory, relies on the assumption that the appliances are both fixed and centrally located, and until recently, that was pretty much the only option when building a kitchen - you have a large refrigerator/

freezer and it has one fixed place, and you have one stove top / oven, and it is in another place. While the sink still remains a central appliance that will be permanently fixed, the assumption is no longer true for the other appliances.

Countertop Equipment

Countertop cooking equipment has become light and much more reliable than in the past. Pressure cookers are no longer giant metal pots requiring constant attention, but push-button electronic equipment that runs on inductive heating that you can walk away from without worry.

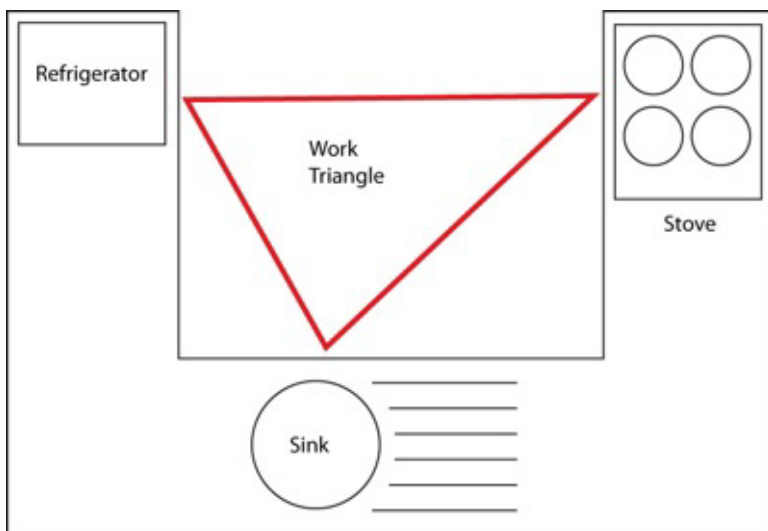
Countertop ovens are now just as fast, or faster, to bake with than conventional slide in or built-in ovens. They're large enough to fit a 12" pizza, but they're small enough to cook portions more appropriate to families that don't necessarily eat at the same time.

Countertop stoves are lighter and faster as well. Induction cooktops will boil wa-

ter literally while you watch. Griddles and grills can be faster and more convenient than firing up the stove, and require less effort than pots and pans.

Most of these items are light, easy to clean, and can be put away when not in use, just like any other specialty cooking appliance (coffee makers, waffle irons, etc.). More importantly, though, they're not restricted by the traditional kitchen triangle - these items can be placed anywhere on the countertop, and relocated as quickly as desired.

The same can be done for refrigerators and freezers, if planned for. Instead of one centrally located refrigerator/freezer at great expense and use limitation, consider under



counter refrigerators and freezers. Under counter refrigerators can be specialized to individual needs. It takes roughly three 3' wide undercounter units to equal the volume of a standard kitchen refrigerator / freezer.

Instead of a mass-produced one-size fits all arrangement, that rarely fits all of one's refrigeration needs, multiple smaller refrigerators and freezers can be used, and can be placed more conveniently to the actual work zones of the kitchen.

Work Zones

Instead of a work triangle, another method for kitchen design is to designate work zones. One area of countertop for meal prep, another for general cooking area, another for plating, etc. While the triangle takes this into account, it becomes immutable after building in fixed appliances. With work zones, the areas are flexible enough that if the use changes, so can the work areas, with little effort.

Counterspace Freedom

With fewer fixed and built-in items, more counterspace becomes available, and is much easier to maintain and clean than the traditional kitchen. For even more convenience, consider adding a deep shelf for your microwave and countertop oven. Set 16" above the standard counter, and 18" deep, it can be a place to keep the larger appliances out of the work area, yet still be convenient to use.

Repair, Replace, Upgrade Freedom

One of the great drawbacks of central, fixed appliances is that if they break, they are often just as expensive to fix as to replace, and they can be out of services for days while awaiting either option. With smaller, decentralized appliances, you can replace them with relative ease, or simply upgrade without as great a cost concern.

Exhaust and Hood Considerations

Without a fixed, open cooking appliance, like a stove, the building code has no requirements for an exhaust hood in a residential kitchen. Forgoing one, however, may not be the best idea. If a cooking work-zone can be predetermined, it's still a good idea to have a proper kitchen hood for using open air cooking devices, like a griddle or countertop stove.

There is still the freedom of counterspace below such a hood, and interchangeability of equipment. Another option, instead of a hood, is a centralized exhaust fan for the entire kitchen, and with new whisper technologies, you will barely notice it's there.

What You Want

Kitchens are a very individualized space, and some of these newer design ideas may not be for everyone; and there's nothing wrong with that. You might prefer to cook on a gas stove, or perhaps you bake in large quantities, so a standard 1/2 sheet oven is more appropriate for your use than a 1/4 sheet countertop oven.

You should design your kitchen for your needs. If you find that you rarely use more than one stove burner, bake infrequently or in small batches, and use a lot of countertop cooking equipment, and never seem to have enough counter top space - don't feel confined by traditional kitchen design.

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