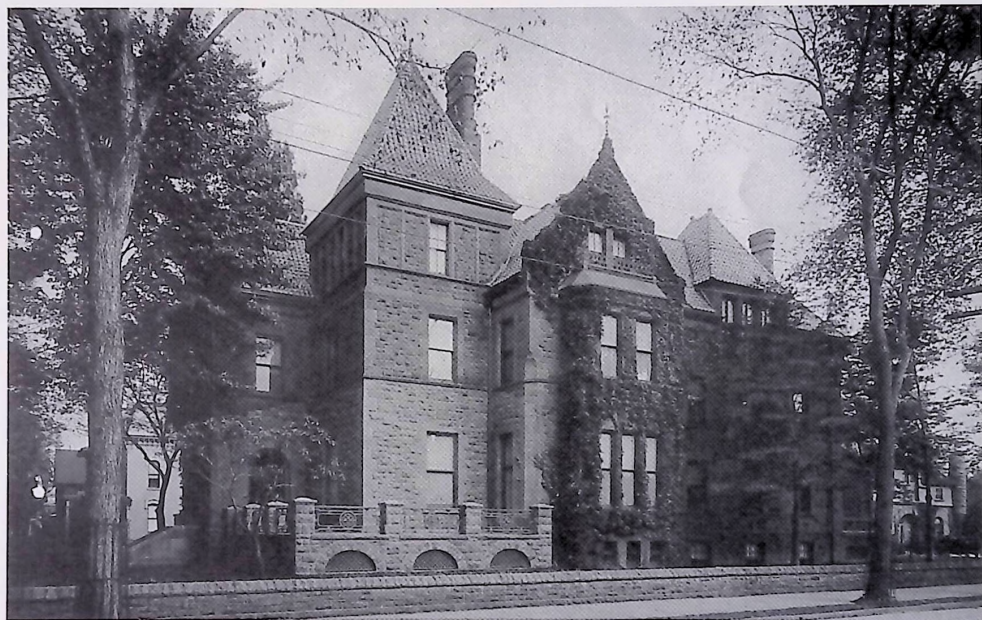


Kirby Hall



Wilkes University

202 SOUTH RIVER STREET
WILKES BARRE, PENNSYLVANIA



P.O. Box 111
Wilkes-Barre,
Pennsylvania 18766
(570) 408-5000
1-800-WILKES-U

June 2001

Dear Friends of Wilkes University:

As one of my last acts as president of Wilkes University, I am delighted to share with you the enclosed booklet on Kirby Hall, one of the architectural treasures both of the University and of the Wyoming Valley.

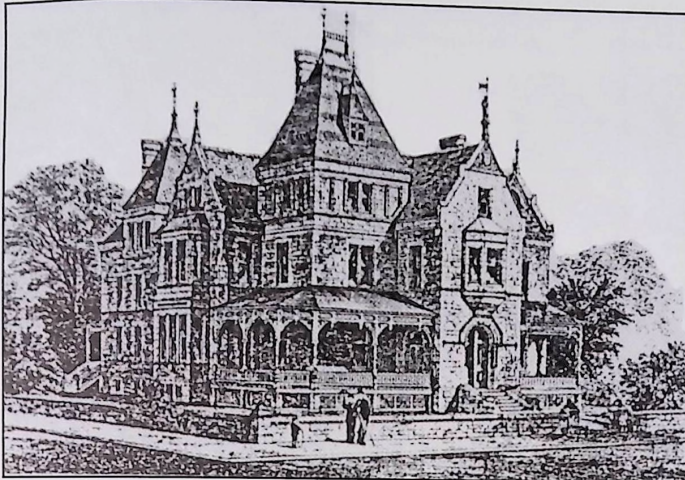
Written by Betsy Bell Condron and prepared for publication by Professor Harold Cox for the Wilkes University Press, the booklet tells the story of the house and of the family who lived in it, "for it is those people who give a house its soul."

Celebrating the complete renovation of the home of Fred Morgan and Jessie Amelia Kirby, made possible by the generosity of their grandchildren, the story we are presenting weaves together the architectural and the familial. Built in 1873, Kirby Hall is the centerpiece of Wilkes's beautiful urban campus and one of the most imposing structures in the Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania Historic District.

We hope you will visit the renewed Kirby Hall and marvel at its beauty and be inspired by the deeds of the family that made it a home. We also hope that you will celebrate, as we do, Allan P. Kirby, Sr.'s gift of the "Kirby Home of Education" to then Bucknell University Junior College, on December 5, 1941. A vast majority of the more than 22,000 alumni of BUJC and its successors, Wilkes College and Wilkes University, have enjoyed the elegant ambiance of Kirby Hall over the last six decades. By the generous gifts of Kirby grandchildren, the home has been secured for another sixty years.

Sincerely,

Christopher N. Breiseth
President Emeritus



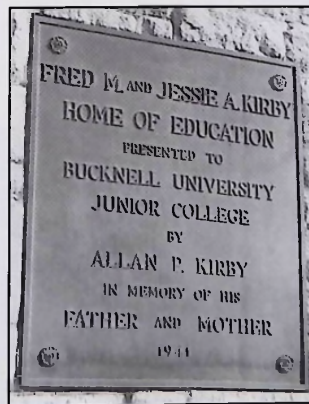
Kirby Hall, designed by the famous architect, Frederick Clarke Withers, is an example of High Victorian Gothic architecture. Built in 1873, Withers considered this mansion to be one of his important works for it is included in his 1877 promotional pamphlet, *Buildings of F. C. Withers*. Its pointed arches, decorated chimneys, heavy bay window over the entrance and use of rough Wyoming bluestone create a most dramatic entrance façade. Called a "Villa", it was featured in the December 1876 *Architectural Digest* as a landmark masterpiece.

Although the following pages highlight Wilkes University's Kirby Hall, former home of Fred Morgan and Jessie Amelia Kirby, the story of a house is not complete without telling about the people who lived therein, for it is those people who give a house its soul.

It seems appropriate that the site of Mr. Kirby's handsome residence was the # 1 lot on Wilkes-Barre's original 1770 Town Plan. In a way, its history parallels that of this Valley's development: from Indian campsites to Jabez Sill's simple log cabin; from its second house where the area's first marriage took place in 1769, between Wyoming Massacre hero Nathan Denison and Elizabeth Sill; on to the early 1800's large frame home of Judge Roswell Welles, State Legislator and one of the first attorneys admitted to the new Luzerne County Bar. (He was a Pennamite sympathizer who stipulated that no Connecticut Yankee could claim his land). It held less prestigious occupants, including a lumberyard, until 1873 when Stephen Thurlow commissioned the stunning building we have today.

In 1880 J. Frank Lee paid \$40,000 for the home. In 1886 Reuben Flick purchased it for \$42,500 and sold it to Mr. Kirby in 1905 for \$55,000. Following F.M. Kirby's death in 1940 his son, Allan, gave it to Bucknell University Junior College (now Wilkes) as the "Fred M. and Jessie A. Kirby Home for Education."

A sumptuous residence then became the college's richly housed library. President and Mrs. Eugene Farley lived in its third floor for several years. Students, most of whom had never been inside such an elegant structure, were treated to its awe-inspiring interior along with classroom learning in its gracious rooms. As well, the spacious Carriage House, since removed for campus expansion, became a desperately needed Student Center and cafeteria. Kirby Hall continues to fulfill its mission as the University's Department of Language and Literature where faculty and staff work within stunning surroundings. It remains, literally, a "HOME" for Education.





Fred Morgan Kirby
1861-1940

Married
May 27, 1886



Jessie Amelia Kirby
1861-1933

It is interesting to note that from modest living quarters on Lincoln Street in the city's Heights section, Mr. Kirby moved to 64 W. River Street where he had a Queen Anne frame home built for his family in the late 1890's. By 1905 his fortunes had improved again and he purchased this magnificent mansion from Stephen Leonard Thurlow, a wealthy local merchant. By 1910 Mr. Kirby had replaced the wrap-around porches seen in the picture on the previous page, for today's unroofed stone terraces and iron railings.



Another Kirby home deserves mention here. For several years, the Kirby family had summered in Glen Summit Springs and in 1914-15 their palatial stone house was erected in the midst of eleven acres at the top of the mountain there. "Greystone Terrace" included a tennis court, pool, stables and exquisite Japanese Gardens.

Kirby Hall is certainly rich in the heritage of its ancestry, but it also serves as a prestigious legacy of Wilkes-Barre's heyday. Imposing and replete with architectural details of prime craftsmanship, this gracious mansion of 21 major rooms preserves a certain residential ambience, an essence of the past, which, in the words of a former student . . . "caress my eyes each time I pass." It earned early placement on the National Register of Historic Places and continues to stand out as a stately gem within the framework of treasures on the university campus and Wilkes-Barre's "River Street Historic District."

With grateful thanks to Kirby Family Foundations, and Wilkes University Trustee, Allan Kirby, for his major personal contributions, Kirby Hall now stands at the start of a new century, in superb restored condition.

Wilkes University is proud to announce to its Kirby family benefactors and to its own wide constituency that the recent renovation/restoration of Kirby Hall has earned the WilkesBarre Chamber of Commerce 2000 Pride of Place Award. The building represents both an investment in mindpower (critical for the health of the area) and an elegant reminder of the region's historic past. As well, the restored rooms will increase the public's understanding of the Kirby family's place in the progress and enrichment of Wyoming Valley.



The principal rooms are arranged along the sides of the Central Hall. One first enters through the stunning marble-tiled foyer with its magnificent ironwork chandelier and wrought iron doorway, seen at the far end of the entrance hall (above) as renovated today, and behind the statue in the original hall, shown at the left.



Although few changes were made from the original blueprints, the staircase pictured to the left had first called for two sets of steps leading from each side of the landing to the second floor. Upon Wilkes' acquisition, this Reception Hall was covered in scarlet brocade. The landing shows flocked velvet wall covering and gas light fixtures. Eugene Farley, first president of Wilkes, is shown inspecting the building at the time of the Kirby gift in 1941.



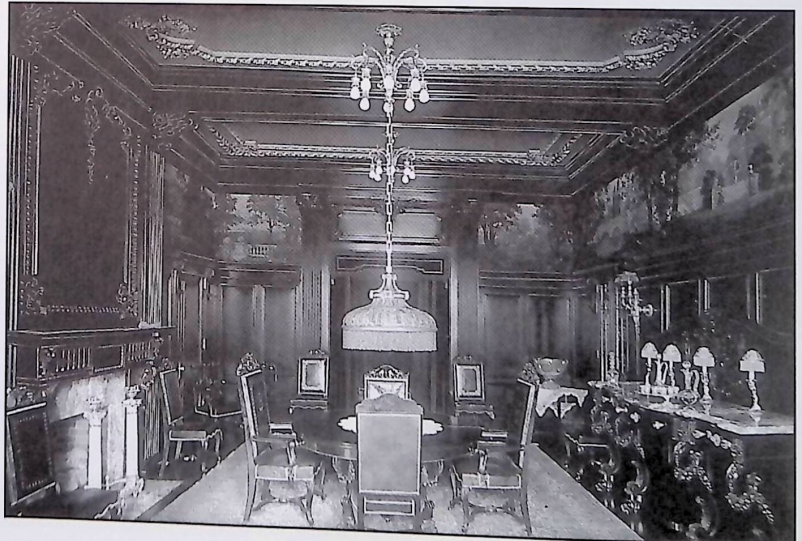
The large Salon, to the left of the entrance, was used for formal occasions. Now it has become a special scene for educational gatherings, English departmental celebrations, poetry readings, and use by various community groups.



The stunning Dining Room, opened to both the front Morning Room and, of course, the kitchen/pantries in the rear. Exquisite scenic paintings above the wainscoting around the walls were done in the early 1870's by a Frenchwoman, Mlle. Juliette Gambarro. They have been cleaned, adding beauty, interest and warmth to what is now Wilkes' Seminar Room.



Before Ann Kirby Kirby's death in 1996, she was most involved in the refurbishment of this particular room. Her Virginia family has made special donations to it, in her memory and in tribute to the legacy of her grandparents.



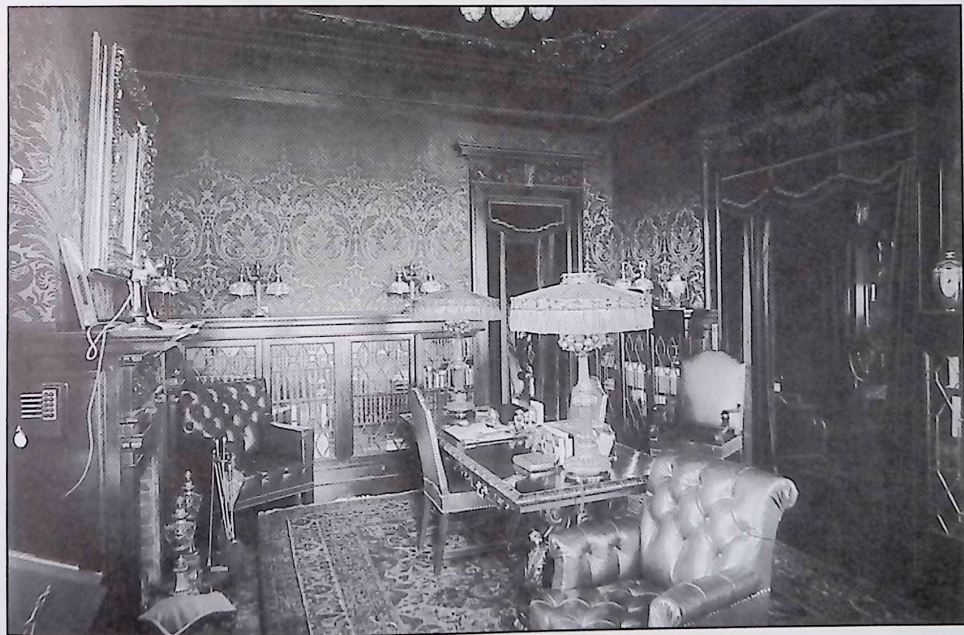
As one walks through Kirby Hall, it will be apparent that much of the grandeur of the Kirby's occupancy remains for us to savor and enjoy today. Photographs of the mansion's interior, taken in 1925, depict formal richly-embellished furnishings and décor similar to those shown in the Living and Dining Room, opposite, and the Library, below.

A friend of Mrs. Kirby's might have had tea with her in the Reception Room, called a Morning Room in houses of this size. It is situated in the southwest corner, directly right of the entrance.

Grace Jessie Kirby Culbertson has warm memories of being with her grandparents in this room and she has been especially interested in and financially generous to its renovation, as a memorial to them.



A comfortable library was situated in the northeast corner, opening from the Salon as well as from the hallway. It was probably a favorite family gathering place. Because of the Kirby's close connection with Lafayette College, the original library was moved there many years ago.



Of course, an imposing home such as Kirby Hall has many large, former bedrooms, dressing rooms, baths, storage and closet areas, on its second floor. As befitted such a stately house, the servants' quarters were commodious, located on the 3rd floor and reached from their own dining room by way of the back stairs. The chauffeur and gardeners had their rooms over the Carriage House. As well, there was a Billiard/Game Room (pictured here) and the wine cellar with its terra cotta racks, had a fine reputation. The interior architectural details are still noteworthy ... mahogany and cherry floors, exquisite woodwork, Italian marble fireplaces which remain as decorative centerpieces in the seven rooms they embellish.



The rise of the Kirby empire is well documented in countless state, national and international histories. Throughout this epic tale of hard-won, brilliant success an unique phenomenon existed. The Wyoming Valley people seemed to share a proprietary feeling for the Kirbys and basked in that success along with the rest of the world! They considered this remarkable family as their own. Possibly, such wholesale pride stems from F.M. Kirby's strong desire to "give back" to his beloved community. He believed he should return his good fortune to the populace who had supported his life and entrepreneurial career.

As we enter the 21st Century, his descendants continue Mr. Kirby's legacy of sharing family prosperity by way of civic, humanitarian and philanthropic gifts and the community continues to feel pride as well as appreciation for the Kirby deeds:

In daily conversations: Wilkes-Barreans tell of help received at **The Angeline Elizabeth Kirby Health Center**; Wyoming Seminary students in Kingston laud their **Kirby Library**; mothers with gangs of kids grin with relief as they enter **Kirby Park** on a hot summer day; compliments flow as fun and culture is absorbed in **The Kirby Center for Performing Arts**; **The Allan Kirby Center for Free Enterprise and Entrepreneurship**, located on the Wilkes campus, instructs students and the public alike in a uniquely rare endeavor; Mountaintop school teachers remind each other of the excellent resources at **The Marian Sutherland Kirby Library**; **St. Stephen's Church** worshipers give thanks for invaluable Kirby support; widely diverse groups meeting at **The Kirby Episcopal House** in Glen Summit speak with grateful awe about that wonderful center; and then there is **Wilkes' Kirby Hall** which draws admiration from thousands of young and old who enter its beautiful portal each year.



Allan Price Kirby
1892-1973

Married
February 14, 1918



Marian Sutherland Kirby
1892-1980



We are aware of F.M. Kirby's ties with the Woolworths and their revolutionary approach to merchandising which spearheaded one of the major commercial enterprises in the country. We enjoy knowing that "our" American mercantile legend, in spite of worldwide business associates and membership in the most elite social and civic clubs in the east, remained a humble, modest gentleman. And, as the area's greatest benefactor, it is endearing to hear about his "first desk", an old crate he kept for decades, and to follow the amazing growth of the Kirby "Five and Dimes" to almost 100 stores by 1912. As well, it is noteworthy to realize that Mr. and Mrs. F. M. Kirby's son, Allan, continued the altruistic traditions of support for Wyoming Valley that was set by his father during the early part of the last century.

Allan Price was the Kirby's second son. Harold, born 1888, died as a baby. Sumner, born 1895, died in Europe during World War II. Allan inherited his father's determination, genius, and ability, following his path in the business world. He gained experience in several roles and founded the large-scale Kirby-Davis Chrysler dealership in 1920. Allan later served as Chairman of the Allegheny Corporation which took control of the New York Central Railroad in 1954. One of his many civic and well-considered philanthropies was the gift of this sorely needed house to the city's first school of higher education ... Wilkes University's predecessor, Bucknell University Junior College on December 5, 1941, two days before Pearl Harbor.

And somehow, although a practical, well-used college classroom and office building, Kirby Hall retains the warmth and special personality of the persons who lived within its walls. The complete makeover of this treasured building's interior finishes and installation of new electrical, mechanical and plumbing infrastructures was made possible through the generosity of the Kirby Family Foundations. "More elegant and majestic than most, with a sense of heritage and an aura of importance surrounding it," Kirby Hall 2000 continues to provide inspiration for those who learn here.

Remarkable as was the founder of the Kirby retailing dynasty, followed by his son Allan's business acumen and subsequent fortunes, it is perhaps equally unique that their family has chosen to follow the guidelines and honor the precepts so well set. These descendants continue with creativity and astute leadership to enrich the world by way of diverse, far-sighted business interests, critical ventures and far-sighted philanthropy.

Mr. and Mrs. Allan P. Kirby's children and grandchildren are listed below:

Grace Jessie Kirby (1918-) and John Culbertson
Marian Grace Culbertson (February 7, 1945-)
Katharine Kirby Culbertson (September 1, 1947-)
John Harrison Culbertson, Jr. (July 23, 1951-)

Fred Morgan Kirby II (1919-) and Walker Dillard
Alice Kirby Horton (December 15, 1950-)
Fred M. Kirby III (January 15, 1953-)
S. Dillard Kirby (September 24, 1959-)
Jefferson Walker Kirby (December 12, 1961-)

Ann Sutherland Kirby (1928-1996) and Lewis Kirby
Wade Howard Osborne Kirby (September 23, 1957-)
Annette Kirby (January 7, 1961-)
Roger Hilderson Wigg Kirby (October 18, 1965-)

Allan Price Kirby (1931-)
Jessie Ann Kirby Lee (June 18, 1954-)
Allan Price Kirby III (April 22, 1956-)
Slater Baran Kirby (March 30, 1959-)
Coray Sutherland Kirby (November 15, 1961-)
Milan Stanton Kirby (December 22, 1963-)





Facta non verba

"DEEDS NOT WORDS" heralds the Kirby family crest (above), a most fitting phrase, for their generous, thoughtful deeds will long outweigh and outlast the voluminous accolades written about Fred Morgan Kirby and his outstanding family.