

Farmland turns to show place

By BARBARA UNDERWOOD

Everyone has heard of the proverbial bull in a china shop, but who has heard of a cow on Telegraph Road? And what does one have to do with the other?

Nothing, really, except by association.

Forty years ago when Edward and Rachel Lauckner were looking over the site of what is now Pontiac Pottery in Bloomfield Township, a cow ambled across Telegraph Road into the field where they were standing.

They bought the property, then farmland, in January 1937, built the building and opened for business that fall. And they have never had a bull in the china shop.

"Through all those years we've grown tired, but have never grown tired of the business," Mrs. Lauckner said this week. "I think it is because things are so beautiful. You just can't grow tired of it."

PONTIAC POTTERY is the only surviving business of three that were in that part of the township 40 years ago. Devon Gables Restaurant and a gasoline station are gone.

The Lauckners opened their pottery business in Detroit in rented quarters, but when the rent went up after four months they "packed up the dishes, stored them in his parents' basement and started looking for property," Mrs. Lauckner explained.

They never worried about a lack of business because of their isolated location, Mrs. Lauckner said.

"We didn't even have a telephone for the first 15 years we were here," she added. "We would have had to pay for all the telephone poles from Orchard Lake Road."

Bloomfield Township had only one policeman at that time, also, Lauckner recalled.

THE DISPLAY area at Pontiac Pottery is the same size today that it was 40 years ago but storage space has been added. The Lauckners' living quarters were attached to the main building and the former kitchen is the office today. Mrs. Lauckner indicated where the kitchen window had been.

Two of the five Lauckner children are active in the business today and nine granddaughters help out some of the time... sweeping, carrying, counting and other chores.

Pontiac Pottery has more than 800 china patterns in stock, "not counting what is under the tables," Mrs. Lauckner said.

ner said. "It costs me a dollar to have them counted." Her 13-year-old granddaughter did the counting and Mrs. Lauckner said "up."

"I don't think there is a store in Michigan with as broad a collection as ours," she said. The merchandise under the tables includes many discontinued patterns, some going back two or more decades.

"The industry has changed a lot in 40 years," Mrs. Lauckner said. "You used to be able to go back 25 years for a pattern. Now it is more like five years."

THE LAUCKNERS have tried to maintain old patterns while adding new ones through the years. Mrs. Lauckner advises people to "pick a proven pattern. The greater the acceptance, the longer the life."

Styles in china change as in everything else. A generation ago plain colored pastel dishes (Luray) were among the most popular. Those gave way to solid darker colors such as burgundy, forest green and lime green.

Ten years ago dark stoneware became popular and today lighter floral patterns are "in."

"Every 15 or 20 years you could bury every pattern and start over," Mrs. Lauckner said. Almost every one, that is. For the person who still has some Luray china, there may be a few old pieces under the tables at Pontiac Pottery.

Known as "Michigan's largest dinnerware specialists," Pontiac Pottery draws a steady trade from at least a 30-mile radius. Steady customers come from as far away as Plymouth and Port Huron and from Toledo and Saginaw.

A recent customer came from Pennsylvania. During the holidays customers came from 30 or more towns daily, Mrs. Lauckner said. A recent large mail order was shipped to California.

THE STORE is open seven days a week and the Lauckners are there some or part of every day. Hours are 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sundays.

The daily hours stem from the days of one-car families and the wife had to get out of the house on Sunday.

"China stores became the place where the family went," Mrs. Lauckner said.

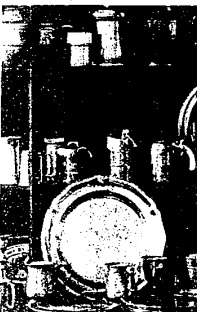
Sixteen employees including three packers work at Pontiac Pottery. Two of them are Mrs. Lauckner's sisters, Mary Wilson and Anne Scott. Mrs.

"I don't think there is a store in Michigan with as broad a collection as ours."

—Rachel Lauckner



Sparkling glassware mixes with the china at Pontiac Pottery.



China, glassware and pewter, too.



A cookie jar made for filling.

Scott has worked there for more than 30 years.

"We are all like one big family," Mrs. Lauckner said. Employees are served morning coffee and home-cooked lunches and dinners if they are working at those times.

Lauckner "took over the cooking two or three years ago," and also helps unload the trucks and pack orders.

"Some people can loaf gracefully," he said, "but I'd go bananas."



Rachel Lauckner (left), owner with her husband of Pontiac Pottery, discusses a customer's needs.

Dunham's wins award

By LINDA TAYLOR

When it comes to sports, Dunham's Sports Outfitters is a winner.

The 30,000-square-foot retail store at Northwestern and Orchard Lake Road at Fourteen Mile recently added another award to its athletic career.

Owner-buyer Robert L. Schmalzried returned from a sporting goods dealer conference in Chicago with a sphinx statuette—the annual award for best independent retailer in the country.

"We do a greater dollar volume than any other sports outfitter in the state," said Schmalzried, a veteran of 40 years in sporting goods sales.

A resident of Farmington Hills, he started in sporting goods in Spokane, Wash., before moving to New York and Detroit where he was in charge of sporting goods for 161 Kmarts.

"He bought Dunham's in 1953 when it was a bait and tackle shop at Northwestern and Telegraph. He moved the shop in 1963 to its present location and added another 10,000 square feet last summer, a business boost if Northwestern Highway extension had been built," Schmalzried said it doesn't concern him.

"I don't care one way or the other."

It won't change my corner."

SCHMALZRIED SAID business has been especially good this winter, with supplies of thermal underwear and mittens difficult to restock.

"The supplier said I could get more underwear in May," he said. "And it's impossible to get good values in cross-country skis now."

He is the only buyer for his store and orders merchandise up to one year ahead of expected selling time. About 8,000 square feet of the store space is used as a warehouse.

Although he has no more room for expansion, Schmalzried said he hopes to continue to "improve internally," adding carpentry and improving interior decor.

He also hopes to get back into boats. Once the "world's largest aluminum boat dealer," Dunham's expansion (and a water retention pond) took over space once used by boats.

WHILE IT no longer sells boats, Dunham's does deal in water skis and life jackets, as well as most any other type of sporting equipment on the market—from thermal socks to guns to tennis dresses. It also still stocks live bait.

"We compete with everybody," Schmalzried said. "We compete with the pro shops in clubs, with other sporting goods shops, with the discount stores. But it's friendly competition."

He said Dunham's is able to beat most competition's prices by dealing in volume sales and taking a lower markup on name brands than many shops.

"We also own our own building, and our overhead is low," he added.

While he seldom finds time for his own favorite sports—salt-water fishing, tennis and golf, Schmalzried is active in donating sports equipment to needy children and takes pride in training employees—from co-op high school students to future sales executives.

A member of the Greater West Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce, Dunham's has been the training ground for 50 sports retailers now spread throughout the country, many of whom now have their own shops.

"It feels good to see an employee move up," he said, adding that his training technique resembles that of football's late Vince Lombardi: "I'm tough on people."

Mall merchants elect directors

Orchard Mall Merchants Association held its annual general meeting last week in Stafford's in the Maple and Orchard Lake Road mall.

Seven members were elected to the board of directors.

They are: Howard Efros of Efros Drugs, James Macy of All for Learning, Sam Veillette of Veillette Haircutters, Maureen Sillman of Bookpeople, Eleanor Lakin of Call It Love, Kevin Lewis of Beckwith Evans and Sue Roberts, mall manager.

The board is an in-mall governing council which works to promote the mall image.

By JOE MARTUCCI

Some leasing agents in Southfield and Troy wish they had Nathan Shafkind's problem.

Shafkind is with Burland, Reiss, Murphy and Mosher, exclusive leasing agents for Bingham Farms Park Plaza—the two large, white office buildings on the east side of Telegraph, between Twelve and Thirteen Mile roads.

Despite the glut of office space in the metropolitan area, Shafkind has had to turn away two large tenants who wanted to rent space in Bingham Farms Park Plaza.

The two buildings which contain 180,000 square feet of office space each. They were fully occupied, with the exception of a few small offices, within 18 months of completion.

"It's not that we have a waiting list, but we're fortunate to have leased out the second building one and one-half years after the opening. We're down to marginal space now," Shafkind said.

The northernmost of the identical office building is the newest, having been completed in Oct., 1976. The other building opened in the summer of 1974.

"Even with that building, we had phenomenal success. It was 80 per cent leased around the first anniversary of completion," Shafkind recalled.

HE OFFERED a number of theories to explain the success, but said

business

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His job mixes art and business

By CORINNE ABATT

If the work of Michigan artists is ever to receive wider appreciation it will be due, at least in part, to the efforts of Jim Hale of Bloomfield Hills.

Hale, formerly assistant director in charge of public relations and advertising for Michigan Council for the Arts, MCA, began a new business, Artists Group, fulltime last summer.

He and his wife, Elaine, who handles many of the business details operates this new briefcase-type gallery representing some 30 Michigan painters, sculptors and weavers. Customers are business people, corporations and decorators.

When Hale calls on clients, the ones who choose art for public and commercial buildings, he carries a portable slide projector and screen and usually a few actual pieces of art.

A PERSONABLE MAN, Hale talks easily and informally about his artists as he shows his slides. "I don't try to educate my clients. I'm a salesman, not an art expert," he said.

Yet, because he has a knowledge of both the art and business world and is a close friend of all the artists he represents he is a natural for the kind of clientele that is developing rapidly.

Hale chooses his artists for variety and quality. He is aware of each artist's style, background, limitations (if any) whether he will work to color specifications, size and budget—both the client's and the artist's.

THE VARIETY RANGES from the representational paintings of James D. Ross, "my barns and meadows guy," to the abstracts of well-known local names like Mary Beard, Peggy Sayed of Birmingham and Jo-Anne Westerby of Troy. In between representational and abstract are works by Igor Begudin, Thad Brykalski, Louise Colussi and many others.

It has been a fast track for Hale from the moment he decided to go fulltime with the enterprise.

"I haven't even scratched the surface in this part of the state yet,"

Hale said and mentioned that one of his weavers, James Gilbert, a Cranbrook Art Academy graduate, was recently given a commission by the Renaissance Center. Three paintings were sold to Chrysler for the Highland Park headquarters not long ago.

ONCE HALE finds the person in a company who is responsible for purchasing art—it may be anyone from a secretary to a vice-president—he makes an appointment. He never goes in cold.

Although Artists Group was formed as a profit making organization, Hale has a strong commitment.

"AS I SEE IT, no one has been actively promoting the Michigan artist, to his or her best potential markets—the major design studios, interior decorators, large corporations, architects, and other allied organizations and individuals."

"WHEN WE GET into the presentation and clients see the kind of work and obvious quality, they generally get turned on. If they find an artist they like, I take them to the artist's studio if the person has time. If not, I go myself and pick out pieces I think might work."

Soon after he was into the business, he discovered certain things sell better than others.

"EARTH TONES, rust shades, other representational or semi-representational sell well, abstracts only rarely. Most of the people who are putting art in their offices don't need any more challenges than they're getting. Abstracts challenge. Young professionals, doctors and lawyers, will go for abstracts."

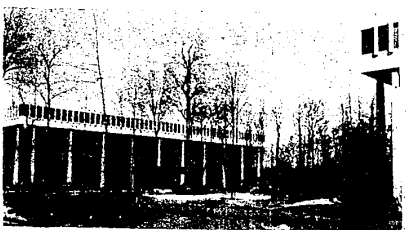
If the Hales have a problem, it is parting with some of the art which they have in a rotating collection in their home. Paintings to be delivered or taken as samples are kept there and the Hales always have difficulty parting with some which seem meant for them.

It's all part of the business. Hale knows that—it's just that he happens to like what he sells.



Jim Hale of Bloomfield Hills is in the business of selling Michigan art to new markets. (Staff photo by Tracy Baker)

No vacancy in Bingham



A 2.5-acre park between the twin office buildings on Telegraph Road in Bingham Farms is one of several features attracting tenants.

It's probably due to a combination of things.

A Birmingham mailing address is probably one of the factors. There's also the park-like atmosphere, the two restaurants, Bobbies and The Atrium, and the wide range of services."

A 2.5 acre park, complete with a small lake, benches and a swing separates the two office buildings. Tenants include Security Bank and Trust, a jewelry store and a travel agency.

"The location on Telegraph also seems attractive. We're only a mile from the (I-96) freeway and you can get to the airport in 35 minutes."

Detroit Edison occupies 40,000 square feet—an entire floor—in the newer building. Other tenants include

Burlington Northern, Liberty Mutual Insurance Co. and ARA Services.

State Senator Daniel Cooper (D-Oak Park) also has his law offices there. Some of the larger tenants in the older building include RCA, IBM, John Hancock, WXON TV, Burger King Corp., Occidental Life Insurance of America and Frankmen Mutual.

Burton Share Development Co., developer of the office buildings, owns 20 additional vacant acres and long-range plans call for a total of five buildings.

"Building number three will be almost immediately east of the northern building," Shafkind said. "We hope to get it off the ground in early summer."