

Preservation-minded firm reverses a trend

By CARMINA BROOKS

A century-old vintage farmhouse in Livonia has fallen into good hands. It was bought last year by two area attorneys with a love for old buildings and is now renovated for office use.

In reverse of a trend to move to suburban highrises, when lease of the law firm of Klein & Bloom ran out in Southfield's Honeywell Building, they moved their staff into a Livonia country setting this spring.

"We appreciate old buildings, and we wanted our own," senior law partner David Klein said.

On Aug. 1, the firm will hold open house for clients and guests invited to inspect this example of restoration in its best sense — that of preserving old buildings for adaptive use.

THE 16-ROOM clapboard former residence bought by the firm is a "pure form of Queen Anne style architecture," according to state historians. It is just off I-75 at 39040 W. Seven Mile.

Built on a cut stone foundation and constructed with a type of nail that dates back to 1850, passing motorists can easily identify the house by its banistered front porch and second-story cupola.

Shading the porch and buffering the site from a battering of traffic is a huge male mulberry tree. Aged, but strong like the house, the tree has survived with two female mulberry trees in the backyard and lends a home-like character to the property.

Historically known as the Evert House, the site was first registered as historic by the city of Livonia in 1974. This year, through the efforts of new owner Gary Bloom, it was designated an historic site by Michigan's Department of State History Division and nominated for inclusion in the National Registry of Historic Places.

LESLIE J. VOLLERT, historic preservation coordinator for the state in Lansing, said the Evert House is similar to a widely used house plan from a 1900s pattern book, "Artistic Homes," by Herbert C. Oivers.

"This does not negate its significance at all, it rather adds to it," Vollmert said.

Co-owners of the Evert House and partners-in-law, David Y. Klein and Gary M. Bloom, were instrumental in preservation efforts by Franklin officials in the last decade. Franklin boasts Michigan's first historic district to be included in the National Registry of Historic Places in 1969.

Klein is a former Franklin Village President and council member. Bloom is a former president of the Franklin Historical Society and chairman of the Planning Commission and still serves on the latter board.

THE EVERTS were among Livonia's earliest settlers. The property, in their family for 100 years, can be traced back to an 1830 land grant. The family established a vegetable farm and sent

their produce to the East Coast via the Barge Canal in New York State.

Bloom said, "The idea was to preserve the structural integrity of the building, restore it where possible to its original elegance and adapt its use to a professional office."

"The work was performed in close association with Livonia's Historic Commission, Building Department, Planning Commission and Building Code Board of Review. This requires creativity and sensitivity by all persons involved with such a project to make it successful," Bloom said. "We received fine cooperation."

Betty Lee Francis, also of Franklin, who now heads her own architectural firm, Preservation Planning, Inc., based in Royal Oak, was hired as consultant to the restoration project.

"NO CHANGES" were made to the exterior, and extreme care was exercised not only by the architects, but the mechanical engineers and contractors to avoid any damage or changes to architectural characteristics and features of the interior," Bloom said.

Restoration wasn't simple. Where one wall between rooms had been removed, the upstairs sagged, and had to be jacked up to reconstruct the wall.

Very little wall modification was done. Instead, where walls and doors had been removed by previous owners, they were restored in accordance with the original detail of the house.

Carefully restored oak trim, railings and floors and leaded glass windows are notable interior highlights.

Found stored in the barn were original doors removed for an archway connecting what is now Klein's office with a front room. They were restored and replaced in their original position.

KLEIN'S OFFICE features a fireplace. Its old wooden mantle was also found in the barn, but plans to restore it were prevented by a thief. A marble mantle now replaces one of cast stone which the new owner thought was ugly.

In the cellar, stone walls and brick pillars were sand-blasted and featured in what is now an underground level design of rooms by Ms. Francis that includes a library, conference room and kitchen with ample space for utilities and storage.

Bloom's wife, Janice, is given credit

for coordinating interior furnishings for the offices. She worked with the firm's six attorneys so that they could select their own wall and floor coverings and light fixtures.

Traditional 19th century designs from Greenfield Village wallpaper books were chosen for the foyer, kitchen and bathrooms. Area rugs are used in the offices, and only the basement rooms are carpeted, Mrs. Bloom said.

AT ONE TIME there were seven barns on the property. Foundations are still visible. Architecture of two remaining outbuildings on the 0.6-acre site both have cupolas and have been featured in Eric Stone's book on barns.

Queen of Queens pageant to name Miss State Fair

Winners of county and local beauty contests held in Michigan through the last year will vie for the title of "Miss Michigan State Fair" at the Queen of Queens Pageant set for Aug. 26-27 on the State Fairgrounds.

The new queen will receive the traditional crown and roses, a round-trip for two to Florida's Disney World and will be showered with an array of gifts

-ranging from cash to a basket of Michigan's prize-winning products.

From the title to the pageant, contenders will ride in the fair's annual Grand Opening Parade on Aug. 21 and attend the annual "Queens Dinner."

Pageant preliminaries take place Aug. 26 with 10 finalists chosen to compete for the title Aug. 27 on the fairground's music shell.

"THE QUEEN OF QUEENS Pageant is one of the fair's most popular events from the standpoint of both spectators and contestants," said Harold Arnold, the fair's director of entertainment and special events.

"This year's great assortment of prizes should attract a record number of contestants," he said.

Entry blanks are available to all young women between 16-22, who have won a beauty contest in 1979-80, and will be sent upon request by calling Arnold at 368-1000. Deadline for submitting entry forms is Aug. 25.

The 1980 Michigan State Fair opens its gates at 10 a.m. Aug. 22 and runs daily through Labor Day, Sept. 1.

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