

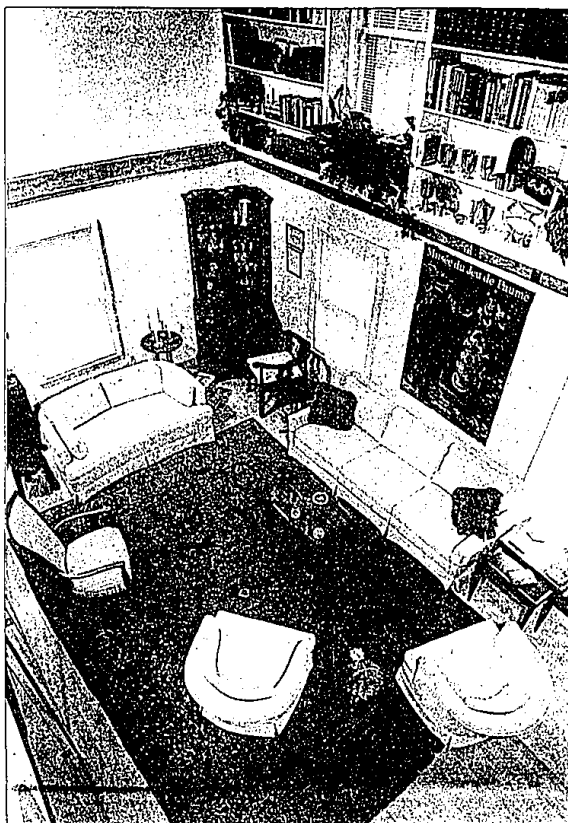
# Creative Living

Co Abatt editor/644-1100



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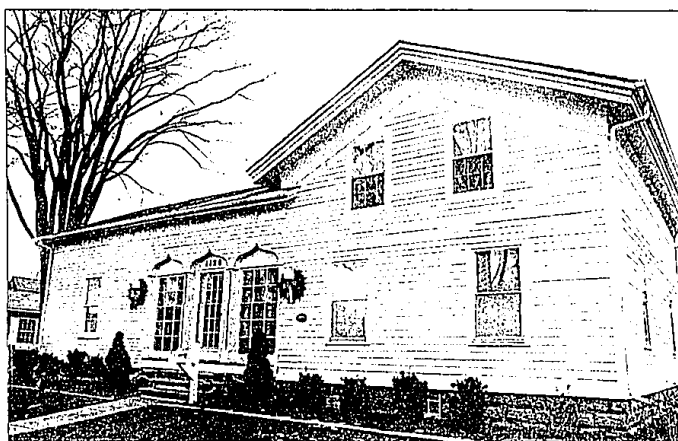
The wall beams and high windows in the living room are evidence of where the second floor once was. The Wards use

one of those old-fashioned long-handle grocery store package grabbers to get the books down.



The dining room of the Ward's home is in the wide center hall and opens on to a new deck at the rear of the home. The

new, curved stairway leads to the second floor.



The design of exterior of the oldest house in Birmingham still being lived in remains much as it has been for more than a century, but now it has been stabilized for a second hundred years.

## House with a past now has a future

By Corinne Abatt  
staff writer

**J**ACK AND JOYCE Ward call it a house within a house. Because they live in the oldest continuously occupied dwelling in Birmingham, historic district regulations prevented them from making any basic changes to the exterior. But, they were free to turn the inside into a beautiful new home.

The Wards bought what was left of the Daniels farm on the south side of Lincoln between Pierce and Henrietta in 1983 from Helen Parks. She was born and had lived in the house for 85 years before selling the property and moving to Florida to be near her daughter.

With their combination of skills, she's a real estate sales person with Weir Manuel and he's a builder/developer, the Wards turned the inside of the house into a work of art, added a pool and a deck in back and built a community of nine homes, Place de la Michele, on the remaining property.

When the couple began the interior renovation of their home, they gutted the interior, took down walls and opened part of the second floor to make a two-story living room and dining area.

**INSTEAD OF THE** original five small bedrooms, there are now two large ones — a master and a guest bedroom suite on the first floor along with the kitchen, dining area, foyer and living room.

The new curved open stairway in the foyer leads to two second floor loft areas connected by a bridge — a large, cozy family room and Jack Ward's office.

"We found there had been at least three additions (to the original house built in 1831) if you follow the stone foundation," he said.

The Wards came to Birmingham as newlyweds in 1955, eventually acquired a large house and raised six children. When they decided to scale down, they wanted to keep a lot of family treasures, be able to entertain friends and family and have a charming guest room for visiting children and grandchildren. The family is foremost in their lives.

Some of the most exciting additions to the home are cleverly hidden. For instance, the mirrored wall in the living room is not only visually attractive, but it conceals a well-equipped bar, a display of family pictures and mementos and well-organized storage areas.

"The kitchen took the most thought," said Joyce Ward. She and her husband discussed everything that needed to be included and then he devised a place for every one of them. All cupboards are ingeniously hidden, leaving a clean, totally uncluttered, white and chrome atmosphere.

Joyce Ward has always liked lots of mirrors, some came from her family, others she had found at garage sales. Although she lost a lot of wall space for mirrors when they sold the big house, she didn't give up the mirrors.

**SHE HAS** a two-story wall of mirrors in the dining room and these, with the beveled edge, glass-top dining table, the white tile floor and the off-white furniture, create a feeling of glamor and excitement.

A collection of beautiful red-background oriental rugs shows up well on the natural wood and white ceramic tile floors.

Jack Ward said, "We used the tile to compensate for uneven floors."

Antique furniture of the more formal kind looks completely at home in this updated, historic house with its contemporary interior. As the original beams and supports with their axe marks were uncovered during the renovation, they were given special attention. Instead of covering or camouflaging them, the Wards display them as proudly as a general does his medals.

They are this house's history as well as its actual support and they stand as testament to the original builders.

Jack Ward said they put in new sewer lines and water lines, a new roof, new heating system and insulation. "Yet, when you look at it, it looks like an old house, that's what they (the historical people) wanted."

They made some changes in the front and were told they had to put it back the way it was. Now, Joyce Ward said, "Now, I'm glad they made us do it. There are even imperfections in the glass in the front windows, but I like that now."

Joyce and Jack Ward say they have the best of both worlds, old and new, but it's really many worlds. They have a home for themselves of manageable size. It has charm, presence, a past and a future and they've built their own charming nine-home neighborhood around it.

Staff photos by Jerry Zolynsky

## Couple build their own neighborhood

"Everybody thinks they're condos, but they're not," said builder/developer Jack Ward.

He was talking about the nine homes on Henrietta, starting at Lincoln, which he and his wife built adjacent to the house they renovated for themselves at the corner of Pierce and Lincoln. It is named Place de la Michele as a tribute to a daughter who died several years ago.

The homes, on 50-by-150-foot lots, are single family, separately owned residences, but a homeowners' association will take care of the grounds and snow-removal.

"We're offering the best of single family and the best of condo living," said Joyce Ward. "We put everything in like we would if we were going to live in one of them ourselves."

The 2,500-square-foot residences are essentially designed for first-floor living. The master bedroom suite, living room, kitchen, breakfast

area and den are on the first floor. There are two guest rooms and bath with a whirlpool on the second.

**THE WARDS** have included many desirable features in these homes, from plank oak floors on the first floor and fieldstone fireplace in the living room to crown molding, a wet bar in the den, two eight-foot bay windows (den and master bedroom), a deck off the living room, cedar shake roof, many top-of-the-line accessories and two stairways.

The solid oak stairway is in the center hall which goes from the front door to the living room at the rear of the house. On one side of the hall is the breakfast room/kitchen area and on the other is the two-story den and master bedroom suite.

The two bedrooms upstairs each have their own lavatory opening into the bathroom with glass-enclosed shower and whirlpool tub.

Every bit of extra space, even around the dormers, has been ingeniously converted to storage areas.



These two are very good at space planning.

Price range is \$239,000-\$259,000. As of last week, all but two were sold. For visiting information, call Joyce Ward, 644-6300.

Joyce and Jack Ward, right, designed the nine new homes with the same concern for comfort and convenience as they did in their own home. Above, one of the new ones with a traditional approach in the interior.

