



Each stone on the south wall of the Harger House was chiseled out by Scott Yeager (left) and his partner, Tom Noble, in the first time the masonry was dismantled.



Tom Noble marks each stone with a number — the historic bricks in its original form at the 12 before removing it from the Harger House, Hills Road location. The code numbers will be used to reassemble.

Stone by stone Old house going to new home

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

DONALD AND Lynn McCluskey are discovering interesting and surprising facts about the 150-year-old Harger House.

Consider that while preparing to dismantle the historic house, contractors discovered the roof had to be removed — only to reveal four 1,000-pound beams sitting on top of the stone wall and used to support the roof.

"That kind of was surprising," said Donald, who, with his wife, has agreed to save the controversial old dairy farmhouse by dismantling it and rebuilding it on another site.

After a battle lasting more than a year, Farmington Hills Historic District Commission members are witnessing a dream come true thanks to the McCluskeys, who are moving the house from its controversial site in the commons area of the Farmington Hills Hunt Club, 3600 Grand Blvd., north of Grand Blvd. The house will be moved to a new site built — where it will sit next to another historic landmark, the Pettibone House, 36400 12 Mile.

UN'TIL THE Harger House makes its new home on 12 Mile, a lot of work has to be done. So far, the exterior trim on the house has been removed, as has the roof and some of the interior woodwork, such as windowsills, McCluskey said.

Noble's Landscaping of Farmington Hills is carefully lettering and numbering the approximately 1,000 stones (of cut granite, gneiss and limestone) — one of the items that makes the house significant. Because the mortar used between the stones was limestone, "it's very easy to break apart," McCluskey said. About 180 stones have been removed.

Other startling findings include the discovery of two interior floors. Under the outer flooring is the original floor — visible from the basement — of large oak planks. "Hopefully, we can use those in the foyer (where the house is rebuilt for office)," McCluskey said.

ery is the use of straw for insulation around the windows. At least it's believed the straw was used as insulation because there is so much of it in conventional locations to be remnants brought in by animals, McCluskey said.

IN REBUILDING the house, boards — the wide white boards that mark the truncated Gables, significant of Greek Revival architecture — contractors found them to be filled by tongue-and-groove. The contractor was surprised at how this thing (Greek) was built," McCluskey said.

With site plan approval expected by mid-February, McCluskey believes the groundbreaking on 12 Mile can take place in April rather than May as originally planned.

Before rebuilding the house on 12 Mile, an 850-foot basement will be built for the structure in the center of the property. Though a 150-year-old White Oak tree, 23 inches in diameter, stands near the house's new home, the McCluskeys plan to do their best to save the tree, says a local tree expert.

short takes

If you recently opened a shop, captured an award, earned a promotion or are planning a new venture or project — and there's a Farmington-area business angle — we'd like to hear from you so you can share your news item with other Farmington Observer readers. Send items to: Short takes, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River, Farmington 48024.

● JOINS PR FIRM

Farmington Hills resident Janet Weiss, formerly senior project director at Nordhaus Research, has joined Casey Communications Management as research services director. Her responsibilities for the Southfield-based public relations firm include identifying research opportunities for Casey Communications Management clients, proposal writing, preparing survey questionnaires, analyzing data and preparing client reports.

Before joining Nordhaus Research of Southfield in 1984, Weiss served as a project manager and national field supervisor for Erick and Lavidge, a Chicago-based research firm. She is a member of the American Marketing Association.

Casey Communications Management has 50 account professionals, administrators and support staff.

● FINANCIAL PRODUCTS

Two Detroit-area companies and one New York real estate investment firm have teamed up to offer consumers and investors a range of financial products through The Saxon Group, a broker/dealership.

The Saxon Group is a joint venture of River Place Holdings, the financial services, real estate and investment firm owned by members of the Stroh family; Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Co. of Farmington Hills (a Household International company); and Saxon Capital Corp., a multifaceted New York real estate investment firm with an investment banking division.

The venture calls for River Place Holdings and Saxon Capital Corp. to develop financial products to be sold through registered representatives of The Saxon Group. The products offered by The Saxon Group will include mutual funds, real estate in-

vestments, sale-leasebacks, leveraged investments developed through mortgage banking, and other investment-related financial services and products.

"We're dealing with a very competitive marketplace where there is intense competition for the investment dollar," said James Ponder, senior vice president and chief marketing officer of Alexander Hamilton Life. "This venture enables those registered with The Saxon Group to offer a wider range of quality products because of its relationship with Alexander Hamilton Life, River Place Holdings and Saxon Capital."

"We have found that real estate is the most profitable use of investor dollars and today, investors are looking for ideas," said Dennis Frank, Saxon Capital Corp. president. "The concept of developing products to be sold through our own broker/dealership with a professional sales force is an idea whose time has come."

The Saxon Group's offices are at 3305 Hamilton Blvd., Farmington Hills.

● MOVING UP

National Bank of Detroit has promoted Sarah McCandless of Birmingham to assistant vice president in its Western Metropolitan Regional Banking Division.

McCandless, an NBD employee for three years, serves as a commercial loan officer at the Metro North Regional Banking Center in Bloomfield Hills.

She is formerly of Farmington Hills.

● SHE'S APPOINTED

Dara Tolbert of Farmington Hills was appointed a seat on the board of directors of the Warren Family YMCA.

The term lasts three years.

● COMPLETES COURSE

Patrick Murphy of Farmington Hills, local representative for Mutual of Omaha and United of Omaha, has completed a comprehensive insurance course at the Career Sales Institute in Omaha, Neb.

One of the most advanced insurance training seminars in the nation, the course is designed to develop professional marketing skills with health and life insurance products as

well as the companies' other multi-line coverages.

Murphy is associated with the Bruce A. Kintz Division Office, the Mutual and United agency in Southfield.

● KELLY SERVICES

Kelly Services, a supplier of temporary help, introduced the Kelly PC-PRO System to train, test and support temporary employees who work at computerized work stations.

The Kelly PC-PRO System evaluates and builds temporary employees' skills and leads to proficiency in use of 11 PC word processing software packages that represent 85 percent of the installed PC word processing software base in North America. It is available in 650 Kelly Services offices.

"The Kelly PC-Pro System provides a solution to today's unprecedented demand for skilled office automation personnel by the business community in Farmington Hills. It's designed so that temporary workers with dedicated word processing skills or basic typing skills can easily master any one of a variety of PC word processing software packages," said Jeff Sheak, Kelly Services' regional manager for the area that includes Farmington Hills.

Research combined with an analysis of customers' temporary employee skill preferences was the basis for selecting the 11 PC word processing software packages of the Kelly PC-Pro System.

● AWARDED CITATION

Edwin Krause of Farmington Hills was awarded Honeywell's Technical Services Citation, the company's highest honor for technical achievement.

Criteria for selection are: building and maintaining strong customer confidence through extraordinary on-the-job performance; solving complex engineering, installation or service problems; developing unique technical ideas that apply to Building Services Division's business; and demonstrating outstanding initiative and innovative assistance in the sale of Honeywell products and services.

From a field of 900 Building Systems Division technical representatives, only five persons received the Technical Excellence Citation this year.

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