



The Mark Arnold House (above) is one of two historic houses at Drake and Howard. This rear view was taken in fall 1988. The house is on the east side of Drake.

# 2 Sleepy Hollow homes need restoring, owners

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Two 19th century homes in what was once the town of Sleepy Hollow near Drake and Howard are in need of new owners, beckoned by history and the desire to restore and live in examples of Michigan's early architecture.

The Farmington Hills Historic District Commission is accepting proposals from potential buyers for the homes near where the first grist mill in Farmington Township opened in 1825.

"The homes can give someone a feeling of what it was like. It's a part of our history that we can touch," commission secretary Ruth Moehman said. "We're looking for people

with imagination and artistic ability."

The two structures — the Mark Arnold house and the miller's cottage — will be open to those interested in restoring and living in the houses from 1-5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, March 11 and 12. Both houses are in the city's historic district.

"This is not a home tour. We'll have a tour when the houses are restored," said local historian Jean Fox, city councilwoman and former historic district commission chairwoman.

**BOTH HOUSES** were originally used by millers in the small town. The unnamed, so-called miller's cottage, 26370 Drake, was built for the miller of the Steele Grist Mill. The grist mill was the first to open in Farmington Township in 1825.

The other house, at 26490 Drake, was built in 1840 by Mark Arnold, a cooper and sawmill operator and later an attorney. Arnold and his partner, Warren Service, both built homes in Sleepy Hollow, but only Arnold's remains.

The city bought the two miller's houses last year when realigning and repaving Drake Road. Work, completed by the city, is yet to be completed on the miller's cottage. But the house could be moved into quickly. The Arnold house will be sold as is. Extensive interior restoration is

necessary to make the house habitable.

"It's the intent of the historic district commission for someone to take these houses and live in them," Fox said.

Both clapboard houses sit on about two-tenths-acre lots adjacent to each other with a little stream running nearby. They share a common driveway. Both are connected to city water and sewer.

"They are part of our heritage. Sleepy Hollow was the first mill town. They thought it was going to be a big city," Moehman said. "These houses are very historically significant. They are very early houses."

**THE 1 1/2-STORY** miller's cottage is a "plain, early workman's house" boasting the characteristic narrow stairway of the time. The cottage has been moved from its original site north of the stream to the south.

"It has an interesting history. It once had a stream running through the basement," Fox said.

The two-story Arnold house features "traces of Greek Revival" on the exterior with a pediment at the top. The house, boasting six rooms, is on its original site with a Michigan basement, or a dirt floor, Fox said.

"These houses are an opportunity for people who love early American forms of architecture," Fox added.

## Group outlines conditions for sale

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Money is not the sole determining factor in receiving a contract to restore and live in two Sleepy Hollow historic homes at Drake and Howard in Farmington Hills.

"Money is only one of several criteria the (Farmington Hills) Historic District Commission will be considering," city councilwoman and local historian Jean Fox said.

The Farmington Hills Historic District Commission is accepting proposals on the two houses until 4 p.m. Friday, March 24. Proposals will be opened and participants interviewed Wednesday, March 29, and contracts will be awarded April 28.

The proposals must include not only how much is offered to purchase either house, but must document the interest and experience of the proponent in historic restoration.

"THIS ISN'T a bid process. We want somebody to adopt the houses," historic district commission secretary Ruth Moehman said.

The proposals also must include the proponent's specific plans for renovating the structures, which the proponent also must live in. Restoration plans are expected to include preservation or restoration of the Greek Revival exterior features; replacement of original materials where necessary; completion time schedule and compensation for the city water and sewer connection.

Each proposal must be accompanied

by a certified check for 20 percent of the price offered on the houses. The check is refundable if the proposal is rejected.

**THE HISTORIC** District Commission will determine which proposal "is the most responsible and responsive to the goals and objectives of the city and the city's Historic District Commission," according to proposal instructions.

"The award may not necessarily go for the highest price; restoration plan, background and experience

may be equally or more important to the city," according to instructions.

Historic district commissioners are expected to consider the proponent's intent for the property, as well as how financing will be provided.

Under the regulations of the city's historic district, proponents may not destroy the houses. Plans for renovation of the exteriors must be approved by the district commission, Moehman said.

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