

Creative Living

CLASSIFIED REAL ESTATE



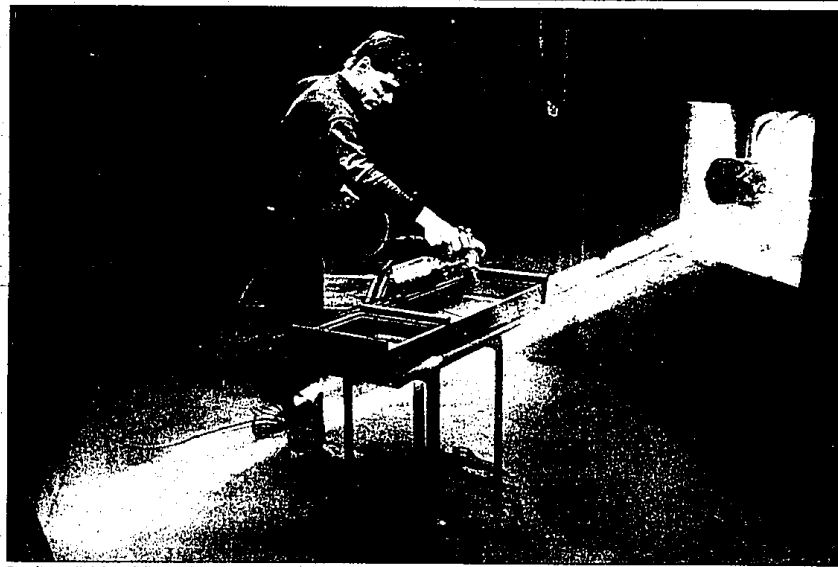
Bob Sklar editor/591-2300

Thursday, January 3, 1991 (A1)

(F)1E



This four-drawer cherrywood chest is part of the Michael Camp Furniture line, 17th and 18th century furniture reproductions made locally and sold in fine furniture stores nationally.



Furniture finisher Mike Roback sprays sealer on Shaker clock cabinets in a spray booth at Michael Camp Furniture's workshop.

Authentic reproductions

Furniture maker meticulously crafts a bit of history



Furniture maker Michael Camp, at the drafting table in his Plymouth workshop.

By Jessica Tigor-Kramer
special writer

JUST THREE years after graduation from Dearborn's Edsel Ford High School, Michael Camp had only \$500, was between sales jobs and didn't have a clue where to apply for work.

Since he was an accomplished wood worker and appreciated antique furnishings, he bravely walked into furniture and accessory shops in the Farmington and Birmingham-Bloomfield area carrying Early American-style shelves and peg racks made in his home workshop.

Hoping just to interest potential customers that day, Camp was shocked to write up five sales before noon. That night, he began filling orders.

Besides marketing his accessories in local stores in 1979, Camp began doing a profitable mail order business through "Colonial Homes" magazine.

A year later, he opened a workshop in Plymouth. Today, he builds a full line of 17th and 18th century furniture reproductions sold in fine furniture stores throughout the country.

"Woodworking was always a hobby for me," said Camp, 32. "My family collected period furnishings and my aunt's house was filled with antique furniture. I grew up learn-

"Woodworking is as individual as a fingerprint."

— Michael Camp
furniture maker

ing to appreciate it."

TODAY, THE Plymouth Township resident employs four full-time cabinet makers and two finishers. But he still selects the designs to reproduce, chooses the materials and works side-by-side with other furniture makers.

"I'm much more comfortable working in the shop than I am doing the marketing. You always have a result in the shop, but you're never quite sure about the marketing part of the business," he said.

Besides selling Michael Camp Furniture in California, Wisconsin, Texas, New Hampshire and other states, he personally markets his reproductions in High Point, N.C., during the International Home Furnishings Show.

Camp opened the Michael Camp Shoppe, 321 N. Main St., in downtown Plymouth, five years ago. There, he sells furniture along with a wide selection of antiques, woven rugs, folk art and collectibles.

Please turn to Page 2



Cabinet maker Ken Light, sands drawer fronts for a desk made by Michael Camp Furniture.

Staff photos by Bill Bresler

Spicer farmstead: a historic site worth preserving

I ENJOYED seeing the historic Spicer House decked out in its finest during the "Heritage Holiday Tour: A House of Inspiration" in December.

The 65-year-old, Marcus Burrows-designed estate house, on the old Spicer family farm in what's now Heritage Park, overlooks 211 of the most panoramic acres in Farmington Hills.

The view of the valley is an eyepopper — any time of the year. And the architecture of the house is very special.

Wine-country, English-country style, the Spicer House is on target to open officially late this spring as the park's visitors and meeting center, thanks to a \$475,000 restoration. I applaud the city of Farmington

Hills, and its parks and recreation commission, for assuring the house's transformation into a public show-case of historical significance.

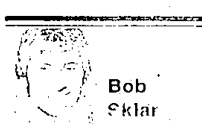
It's a community treasure.

ELEANOR AND John Spicer got the house as a wedding gift from family friend Martha Grey in 1935. It was home to Ellie until her death in 1962.

For 47 years, she raised sheep and kept riding horses, while a suburban community developed around her — a city historic marker outside the house's front stone fence tells us.

She never caved in to developers drooling at the prospect of subdividing the lush land.

The Friends of Heritage and the Farmington Hills Department of



Bob Sklar

Special Services to serve, thanks for hosting the heritage holiday tour. It gave the community a truly inspiring peek at the continuing restoration of the Spicer House.

A Farmington Hills "Historical Commission" might "spread" a different visit, not only taking in the holiday decorations and magnificent vistas but also the architectural splendor, the vaulted ceilings, the

solid oak floors and beams, the sculpted "at rest" ceiling, the "cave" and so on.

While the Spicer House is restored, improvements continue to the sheep barn, now used for day camp and cross-country ski programs. The city will pay 25 percent of the \$250,000 cost to add more day camp nature rooms and restrooms and to winterize them. A state land trust grant will pay the remainder.

AS THE city gears up for seeking renewal of its parks and recreation millage next year, I urge it to "publicly discuss" potential "uses" for the other Spicer outbuildings: the main barn, the stable and the caretaker's house.

Architect J. Michael Kirk, who

surveyed the farmstead for adaptive reuse in 1987, said:

The existing structures are a fine example of a working farm and illustrate the changes experienced by farmsteads with the addition of the city's heritage.

All five of the structures contribute significantly to the historical interpretation and their reuse is possible, though costly in the case of the main barn (\$100,000).

The overall cost, upwards of \$220,000, may prohibit complete renovation of the outbuildings.

But many improvements are still possible, even within the existing parks and recreation millage. "There might be enough money. But we don't know for sure because we haven't updated cost estimates since 1987," says Dan

Potter, city special services director.

LET'S REMEMBER We're talking about saving a historic site in a public park dedicated to spotlighting the city's heritage.

Farmstead once resided in Farmington Hills, but few farm buildings remain.

Resident Dan Burnett aptly described why we should preserve the farm buildings: a vital lifeline to our agrarian roots.

Preservation "will give residents and visitors at least a glimpse of what everyday buildings were like during the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries."

Bob Sklar is assistant managing editor for special projects.