

COVER STORY

HOUSE HAS AUTO-CRATIC STYLE

The phrase "built by Ford" probably brings to mind Henry Ford's Fair Lane Estate in Dearborn or the Edsel and Eleanor Ford house in Grosse Pointe. But it also applies to a residence in Southfield, a stately house that is a hidden jewel on eight acres near the Farmington Hills limit.

"Everybody who has come over has said they never believed there was such a place in Southfield," said Thaddeus Zwirkowski, who has lived in the beautiful house for 28 years.

Henry Ford built the house in 1939 for one of his vice presidents. The two-story, English Tudor style residence is an example of Ford's power; he specified to his executives the exact design of their homes. It also is an example of his eye for quality and detail.

"He built a number of houses for his people," said Louis Rose of Ralph Manuel Associates of Farmington Hills. He and Sheila Rose are listing Realtors or selling agents for the residence.

The house is breathtaking from first sight, with its brick-and-wood exterior and copper roof that has turned to a soft green over the years. Gateway lights run the length of the driveway.

The house sits like a crown on top of a lawn that slopes down to a private pond, containing a bridge inspired by a Monet painting. A brook and mature preserve line the perimeter of the grounds.

From every window... you don't see anything but beauty.

Enter the residence and you are surrounded with elegance and enchantment. The interior is full of architectural treasures, timberbeams and overhead, on the walls and around the doorways. Features include leaded glass windows, coved plaster cathedral ceilings, hardwood flooring, a sound system and intercom. French chandeliers and recessed lighting.

The house has solid supporting walls, some more than one foot deep. A telephone worker told a resident he used up several diamond drills trying to install a telephone jack.

The foyer and hallway are in Italian

ceramic tile. The screen covering a radiator in the hall resembles a rich cabinet. Walls are adorned with embossed wallpaper. You see gunwood archways with peaks that suggest Arabia or India. The banister that swoops around in a curve at the bottom is also of gunwood.

A fireplace of Italian marble is featured in the living room. A nearby family room or den has a large bay window that looks out over the grounds.

Even the basement is inviting, with terrazzo flooring throughout, a bar and several rooms, one of which was a train room for youngsters.

The kitchen is spacious, with big windows and a high ceiling. In the dining room is one of the many classic chandeliers in the residence; this one has arms that resemble branches.

Moving up the stately staircase to the vestibule to the second floor, you see more gunwood archways. The walk-in linen closets and four bedroom closets are lined with cedar panels and have lights that come on automatically as the doors are open. The bathroom features thick porcelain and tiling from before World War II.

Back downstairs you move outdoors to view the in-ground pool, apple orchard and grape arbor. The site also has a horse stable with Italian hardwood floors in the stalls, a chicken coop with a parquet floor, a riding ring and a carriage house. Geese, a peacock, sheep, a goat and a black Angus are among animal "residents" on the property. Pony rides and sleigh rides used to be given here. A shuffleboard is painted on the cement. The sundeck has a hot tub, and cement steps nearby lead to the pond and preserves. A horn was used to call people in from the yard.

By coincidence, the three owners after the Ford vice president have all been medical doctors who raised families here. Lawrence Technological University students stay in one of the outdoor apartments on the property.

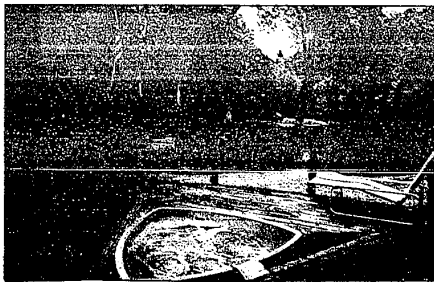
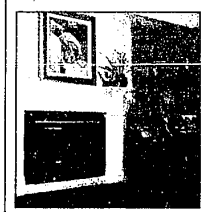
Ford's good planning is apparent in the placement of the structures. The wind on the site comes from the northwest, carrying fresh air from the pond - rather than air from the stable - to the house. The pond is fed by a Rouge River tributary.

HENRY FORD BUILT THE HOUSE IN 1939 FOR ONE OF HIS VICE PRESIDENTS.



Architectural enchantment: Gunwood archways and embossed wallpaper are just some of the features inside the house.

On the cover: Italian marble fireplaces are among the elegant features of a Southfield residence designed by Henry Ford. Photo by Tom Hoffmeyer.



Gracious grounds: A hot tub is on a deck overlooking a private pond and preserves on the site.



At estate: Thaddeus Zwirkowski, who has lived in the beautiful English Tudor style house for 28 years, is flanked by Louis Rose and Sheila Rose of Ralph Manuel Associates of Farmington Hills, listing Realtors or selling agents for the residence.