



MRS. GEORGE CHECKETTES

A bit of Americana, alive and well on Oakland

By DIANE HUBEL

FARMINGTON — There is, in the middle of Farmington, little more than a block away from the noise and confusion of Grand River, a bit of small town Americana still intact.

Oakland Street, south of Grand River, is the kind of quiet tree shaded street, which was common throughout the country 50 years ago, but now is found only occasionally, in small towns, on Mackinac Island or preserved in Greenfield Village.

The homes are old, some as old as 70-80 years, most are in some stage of restoration.

They represent, as one resident said "every phase of American architecture, from 50 years on back, with the exception of the log cabin."

There are several frame houses, an early Victorian home, a modified salt box, and even a brick mansard.

THE RESIDENTS seem to appreciate the history of their homes, many know the background of their own home, and some even know about the others.

Most can tell you the approximate age of their home and the architectural era it represents.

Some even know the houses history, who lived in it previously, who built it, and when additions were made.

The residents are a mixed bag, a few older people, some young families, and even a couple of singles.

Mrs. Claudia Bowes, a young mother said, "This is a nice quiet neighborhood. There is a mixture of people, and they're all charming people. This is the kind of place I like to see my children growing up in."

According to some of the neighbors many of the homes were fairly run-down just a few years ago.

Now most have either been restored, or are in various stages of restoration.

As they have restored the homes, many of the residents have attempted to retain the original flavor of the home by using decorative devices that were unique to their period.

There are a couple of unusual door knockers, an odd mailbox or two, and one old home even has an old time porch swing on the front porch.

MANY HAVE also used colors to maintain the distinction of their homes.

There are several whites, of course, especially on the frame houses, and there are greys and yellows and muted blues, as well.

One home in the middle of the street, a brick mansard, was brought to Oakland from Grand River nearly 20 years ago, by the present owner.

Mrs. George Checkettes, the owner, said that when the house was moved they had to take the

bricks off the house and move the shell of the house.

After the shell was placed on Oakland the house was rebricked with the original bricks.

"They were careful when they moved it too," she said. "We didn't have any cracks or anything. In fact, I had even left some salt and pepper shakers in one of the kitchen shelves, and they didn't even get broken."

Mrs. Checkettes estimates that her home is 75 years old, "maybe older".

NORM WHITSON, a bachelor, who lives across the street, lives in a house which is currently awaiting interior redecoration.

He has been working on the exterior for the past year.

When he bought the house it was painted, what he called a "shade of nothing green."

He had to burn the green paint off before he could repaint it.

"Look at that field stone," he said, pointing to the base of the house, "it is nearly 90-100 years old. When I bought the house it was covered by a row of shrubs, and I discovered it when I ripped them out."

He "discovered some things in the interior of the house too, when he began ripping things up."

When he began to remodel the house, he ripped out a wall which had been part of a pantry.

Behind the wall he found a door, still in perfect condition, and still on its hinges in the door jam.

Apparently the handyman who had built the extra wall didn't bother to take the door off, and just built right over it.

MRS. BOWES, the young mother who said her house is between 60-70 years old, and represents the 1910 period of architecture said her husband has done most of the remodeling on their home himself.

Another home, a blue-grey house, in the middle of the block, has a plaque from the Farmington Historical Society on the front door.

The plaque states that the house, which is a centennial home, of Early Victorian styling, was originally built in 1848, with additions made in 1858.

One couple, Mr. and Mrs. Lemuel Irving who live in a modified salt box said they moved to Oakland from Nine Mile Rd. about nine years ago.

Although their home is just a few blocks from the Grand River shopping district, they feel the neighborhood is quieter than their old one was.

They also find that it is more conveniently located.

"It is just perfect for older people," Mrs. Irving said. "Not only is it quiet, but it is also so close to everything. We can walk to all of the stores, which is nice."



A mansard roof is featured on this house.

Photos by Fran Evert



NORM WHITSON

