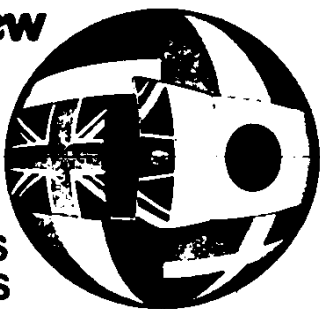


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MRS. ROBERT ROWE

Old house living has advantages, disadvantages

By CORINNE ABATT

The walls are thicker, the ceilings higher, the windows taller and the living? Well, not as easy as you'd think.

Many folks fantasize about living in a grand, old home, going back to the slow, gracious way of life—hanging porch swing, a big farm kitchen, maybe even a real pantry.

The Robert Rowes of Farmington Hills actually did what others dream about. Three years ago, they bought the old farm house at 24770 Power. Built about 1855, situated well above the road in a grove of maples, it suggests the tranquility of an earlier time.

It was the trees which really convinced Mrs. Rowe to go along with her husband's wish to buy the home.

"I took one look at all those trees and thought, 'This is one of those things everyone gets presented with one opportunity. You either take it or regret it the rest of your life.'"

AT SOME TIME there was a north wing which either burned or was torn down. The foundation was unearthed during the excavation for a house on the lot along with a leather-lined well. That wing, together with the present house, would have made about 22 rooms.

The 10 spacious rooms they have are plenty to keep the Rowes and daughter Sue busy. Another daughter, Mrs. Robert Spada, lives in South Lyon.

"Yes," said Mrs. Rowe. "We love

the house," in spite of some surprises and a terrifying moment or two.

There was the day the bees came—by the thousands, a huge swarm gathered on the chimney.

"I had never dealt with bees in my life. I tried calling beekeepers and finally resorted to an exterminator."

The bees returned, but this time she knew what to do.

As the couple remodeled before moving in, it was disconcerting to discover that nothing in an old house conforms to present standard sizes.

"In fact," said Mrs. Rowe, "I had 24 window shades made, and not a one is interchangeable. We numbered each window and shade."

ROWE, a pharmacist who is handy with tools, wanted to replace the door on the one-car, attached garage. There wasn't a door on the market narrow enough. It had to be custom made.

Making up for these inconveniences, though, is more than ample closet and cupboard space, an acre of scenic property, a charming milk house used for storage and a side porch, recently screened, that lends itself to quiet conversation.

Mrs. Rowe swings gently in the chain swing and talks about the house.

"We view it as a hobby. To live in an old house, you either like it or you can't keep up with it. It's all-consuming."

The Robert Rowes happen to like it, bees, odd-size windows and doors and all.

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