

Building Scene

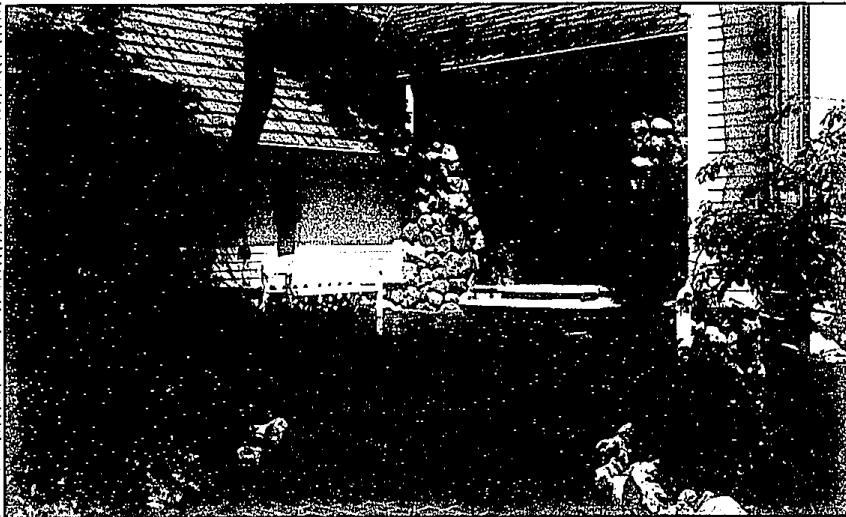
Marilyn Fitchett editor/591-2300

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★ 11



A stone facade at this Birmingham house's entryway and along the structure's lower level plus the rocks used as a border along the shrubbery present a complete theme.

Environment used as home design theme

By Dale Northrup
special writer

The topography in the Midwest generally conjures up in one's mind flat terrain — the prairie.

However, about 10,000 years ago the retreating glaciers left in their path not only flat land but sculptured pockets — hilly terrain and inland lakes.

Southeastern Michigan is a product of that glacial wake, particularly in Oakland County.

Having a variety of both flat and hilly alluvial landscapes provided an ideal setting for agriculture in the 19th century. One hundred years later the country's burgeoning population has supplanted agriculture with architecture — the built environment satisfying humanity's basic need for shelter.

The variety of building sites in the county provides a challenge for the enterprising individual who seeks to

build on an in-town lot or lake lot. Topography plays a tantamount role in determining the type of architectural structure that will be compatible with its surroundings.

With a sensitive architect and understanding client cognizant of their needs, a sense of place can be sought which ultimately will make for good architecture that will last a very, very long time.

"In-town" provides the greatest challenge. Vacant lots fast are becoming extinct in more densely populated, desirable areas but they can be found.

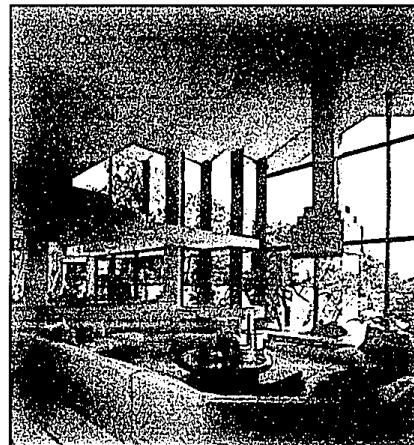
ONE EXAMPLE is a lot on South Washington in Roy Oak, now site of a two-unit townhouse designed by the architectural firm of Stucky & Vitale. Located in an older neighborhood, the style of architecture seemed to warrant something contextual, in this case a Victorian style which is eclectic in nature.

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Extensive use of glass and white brick that blends into the surrounding habitat are used to make this Oakland County

house complement its surroundings. The theme is carried through in the house's interior (see photo at right).



A panoramic view of trees and an inland lake are enhanced by using glass panes instead of bricks to form an outer wall for this Oakland County home. To insure that nothing blocks the view, the fireplace also is encased in glass.

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