

Building Scene

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

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photo by STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

The house, pictured from the front, was designed and built to look as if it has had a historical presence rather than being brand new.

Return to craftsmanship marks French chateau

It is said that baronial mansions like Meadow Brook and Fair Lane built for captains of industry decades ago could never arise today. Apparently, that's not necessarily so.

An 18,000-square-foot country French chateau under construction in Bloomfield Township, a year in planning, two going up and costing several million dollars, should be completed by the end of the year.

Don Bosco, president of a Franklin building company that is constructing the house, and Bob Bryce, a West Bloomfield architect who designed it, declined to identify the owner.

THE STORY, they said, is the craftsmanship and fine detail of the structure.

"This is an architect's dream," Bryce said. "We submit a lot of ideas. Compromises are made for aesthetics or financial reasons. Not

one compromise was made here."

"This has got to be one of the premier homes in Oakland County being built now in terms of size, materials used, detailing, craftsmanship," Bosco said. "The homeowners made the best quality selections they could."

THE HOUSE, on a couple of acres overlooking a lake, was designed to look historical even though it's new, Bryce said.

"What we wanted to convey on the site was something like a religious structure that was destroyed and the only thing left was the entranceway. The house was built around it," he said.

The exterior consists of carved limestone brick, fon-du-lac stone and Dryvit, a stucco-like material. The roof is covered with Vande Hey angled concrete shingles.

Corners of the stone on the house and decorative arches surrounding

the property have been rounded by hand to provide a softer look.

An expansive front courtyard/circular drive and rear terrace are defined by brick pavers.

All windows in the house — more than 100 — are beveled leaded glass. Awnings and downspouts have been treated to convey a copper patina look.

Fine touches — wood and plaster moldings, inlaid wood floors, carvings in high, plaster ceilings, marble and ceramic tiling — can be found throughout the house.

ATTENTION to detail is obvious.

"There have been four trim carpenters for a year now doing this," Bryce said. "It's unbelievable."

"We put some of the best trades people together," Bosco said. "We interview them, review their work. One of the things I pride myself on is the ability to detail."

"One of the outstanding things about the house is the concentration of trades doing work the way it was



Quality craftsmanship is found in wood moldings, plaster ceilings and paneling throughout the house.

done 100 years ago," said Rohn Goldman, a Birmingham designer working with Bryce and Bosco.

"There are many mansions going

up, but not many of this quality," he said. "I did all the lighting, selected every fixture, wood floor, marble, faucets. All the hardware is brass. All the doors are hard-wood cherry."

"We don't want anything to jump out at you," Goldman said. "We want it mellow. We wanted to stay with materials of the period, 18th and 19th centuries. It was the client's hope that when the house was finished, it would look like it had been there all the time."

Five fireplaces are scattered throughout the house. The master bedroom suite on the ground floor contains large, separate his and her bathrooms and closets.

THE MAIN floor is also graced by a library with cherry wood paneling, a kitchen/family room with white oak cabinets and beams, ceramic tile and granite counter tops; a dining room with several styles of trim and a great room with a towering plaster ceiling and oak/mahogany floor.

A potting room for horticulture activity overlooks the rear yard and lake.

Four bedrooms, each with a bath, are on the upper floor.

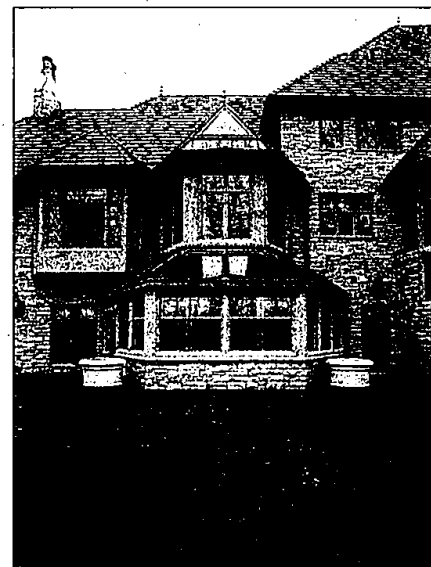
Servants' quarters with bedrooms, kitchen and living space are built on a narrow overhang connecting to the main part of the house and a garage.

A spa, billiards room, exercise room and wine cellar are in the basement.

The house has two garages capable of storing a total of five cars and its own generator to supply power during emergencies.

"The client and his wife brought in pictures of houses in Grosse Pointe, mansions and chateaus in Europe," Bryce said. "We did not duplicate a home. This is a one-of-a-kind design that responds to all the needs and wants of a family. This house is meticulously detailed."

Bosco said the house is the largest he's built in 20 years in the business.



There's no compromising on sight lines and decorative touches at the rear of the house. This angle shows the family room-kitchen over the potting room.



Walkways around the house's exterior as well as nooks and crannies inside provide good views of a lake.