

BUILDING SCENE

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1993

BUILDING SCENE'S NAMES & PLACES

Contractor president

Tom Huff has been elected president of the greater Detroit chapter of the Associated General Contractors of America, based in Southfield. Huff is vice president of operations, central U.S. division, of Perini Building Co. He has worked 30 years in the construction business.

The local chapter of AGC was founded in 1916. Educational programs, labor relations services and government affairs programs are some of its services.

VP at Campbell/Manix

William M. Oakley Jr. of Livonia was promoted to vice president of Campbell/Manix, where he had been chief estimator.

Oakley will be responsible for corporate managerial responsibilities and will oversee all estimating activities including a utilization of a computerized estimating program for bids and proposals.

Campbell/Manix is a design/build contracting firm of industrial/commercial buildings.

Masonry officers

Roy Seelbinder has been re-elected chairman of the Masonry Institute of Michigan, based in Livonia. He is president of R.A. Seelbinder Construction Co., Troy.

Also re-elected were vice-chairman Mariano "Skip" DiGiovanni, president of Central Masonry & Cement, Rochester Hills; secretary John Robovitsky, president of Robovitsky Construction, Southfield; and treasurer Charles Wilson, vice president of Monte Costella Co., Novi.

Energy efficient homes

Builder Gary Sabo will conduct a presentation on building affordable energy efficient homes from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, Feb. 13, at Oakland Community College's Auburn Hills campus.

Sponsored by OCC's Environmental Systems Technology Program, and ENACT, an environmental student association, the program will cover designing, building and financing super-insulated houses. Topics include energy efficient construction techniques, 0 percent down payment options, air quality control, affordable solar energy applications and owner/builder opportunities.

Sabo is president of Future Homes and Parade of Homes-Oakland County. He is past president of the Home Builders Association of Genesee County. He is a four-time recipient of the national "Design for Better Living" award from the American Wood Council.

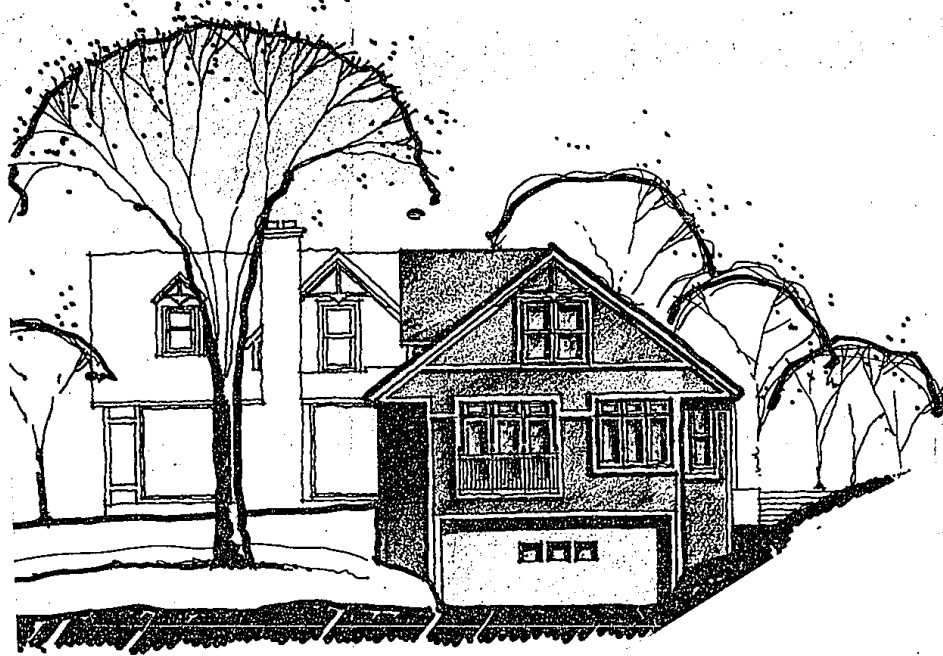
For more information, call 340-6701. The campus is located at 2900 Featherstone, two miles east of the Pontiac Silverdome.



Huff



Oakley



Additional pride: This historic Birmingham house was made more livable by the addition of a kitchen and laundry room on the east end of the house. The other addition was added to the back of the house and includes the master bedroom. The sloping grade allowed for a garage beneath the addition.

Integrity preserved in more livable homes



During lackluster economic times, builders often turn their attention away from new construction and toward remodeling. But the secret of successful remodeling is to leave the house looking much as it did before the contractor arrived at the site.

BY DALE NORTHIUP
SPECIAL WRITER

When there's a slump in the economy, one of the industries to feel the pinch is new construction. The excess of the 1980s and the savings and loan fiasco helped to bring it about. As a result there's a glut of office buildings with resultant high vacancy rates. Prospective tenants can now choose

from a wide range of office space available for rock-bottom rents. New housing construction is struggling thanks to uncertain employment, weak income gains and falling consumer confidence.

As new construction becomes more costly, prospective buyers are considering other alternatives. They are looking at more affordable, older

houses in established neighborhoods that have the amenities of in-town living.

The two million-plus houses started each year of the 1970s are now 20 years old and ready for a facelift. Add to this the houses built in previous decades. Some of these houses have the added problem of small rooms that satisfied an earlier lifestyle. Today's domestic dweller has a penchant for space that can be satisfied by building additions on to older houses.

More livable

Two houses in Birmingham are a

visual testament to the feasibility of making an older house more livable with additions. What is particularly unique about these two houses is that they represent two centuries — one of the late 19th, the other the middle of the 20th.

One is in downtown Birmingham. It is a simple, frame structure with gable ends built in 1898. The other is a Georgian-style colonial in Bloomfield Village built in the 1960s. Both have new additions that complement the original structure. Thanks to the care in maintaining the integrity of

See ADDITIONS, 2F

Computer-programmed system automates appliances in home

BY DOUG FUNKE
STAFF WRITER

Smart House, which uses special wiring to automate household appliances and fixtures, has been hailed as technology of the future.

Intelli/Systems, a fledgling Plymouth firm, provides many of the same services today with computer-programmed system controllers that communicate with adaptive "intelligent" switches over traditional 110 and 220 amp electrical lines.

And all at a much lower price than Smart House, say Larry Oliver and Nancy Austin, a husband-wife team that owns Intelli/Systems.

"We're not changing house wiring. We're adding functionality," he said. "We're putting a high frequency on house wire and switches that can decode and understand."

Oliver, a development engineer at Unisys, is in charge of the technical end of Intelli/Systems, a business sideline for now.

Austin, a former real estate saleswoman, is in charge of marketing and public relations.

"Nobody has to have the house rewired," she said. "That's the good thing about it. You can retrofit now or

later. We hope to be automating a builder's model," Austin added. "The builder will benefit by making a model more attractive and you (customer) will benefit because there will be a keener interest in how it works."

Controllers programmed to specific automated functions are plugged into electric outlets to bring the system on-line. Controllers can be activated by remote control, telephone lines or "intelligent" electrical switches.

Oliver and Austin have spent up-



Bill Bresler/Staff Photographer

Command agents: Larry Oliver and Nancy Austin, owners of Intelli/Systems, display small controllers which are programmed by a personal computer to automate home appliances and fixtures.

wards of \$5,000 to automate their house for demonstration purposes. That includes controllers, transceivers, switches and remote controls.

Their system can program a furnace thermostat attachment, dishwasher, home entertainment equipment and all lights to kick on and off at specific times. Appliances like vacuum cleaners and hair dryers can be programmed to shut off when the phone or doorbell rings.

"When guests leave, I push one button and light the front porch, the back porch and light their way through the living room," Austin said. "It's programmed so in five minutes; the outdoor lights go off by themselves."

"I have a button at my bedside that can turn on every light in the house," she said of a security feature.

See COMPUTER, 4F

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