

BUILDING SCENE

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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1993

BUILDING SCENE'S NAMES & PLACES

Dial M for masonry

The Livonia-based Masonry Institute of Michigan will celebrate M-Day with a rostrum of speakers and a product exposition Thursday, Oct. 14, at the Sheraton Oaks, Novi.

M-Day speakers are:
 ■ Lynn R. Laversdorf, chief of the bureau of architecture, architectural services section, state of Wisconsin. The topic will be "Preventative and Corrective Maintenance of Masonry Systems."
 ■ Lucas E. Pfeifferberger, consultant to the concrete masonry and lightweight aggregate industry in Alpena. He will speak on "Quality Control Checks In Manufacturing Concrete Masonry Units."

■ Elizabeth Rhine Blair, architect and director of quality control for O'Neal Construction, Ann Arbor. She will address "The Total Quality Approach to Masonry Construction."

■ Jacob W. Ribar, senior principal masonry evaluation engineer, structural engineering department for Construction Technology Laboratories, Skokie, Ill., speaking on "Everything You Wanted to Know About Mortar and Grout."

Registration starts at 7:30 a.m., followed by the first seminar at 8:30 a.m. The program ends at 4:15 p.m. followed by reception.

Registration and exhibitor information can be obtained by calling the Masonry Institute, 458-8544.

Kitchen duty

"Creating a Kitchen that Reflects Your Home's Decor," a kitchen design seminar, will be held 3-4:30 p.m. at the Livonia Ekan Allen store, 15700 Middlebelt. Call 261-7780 for reservations.

Homes of steel

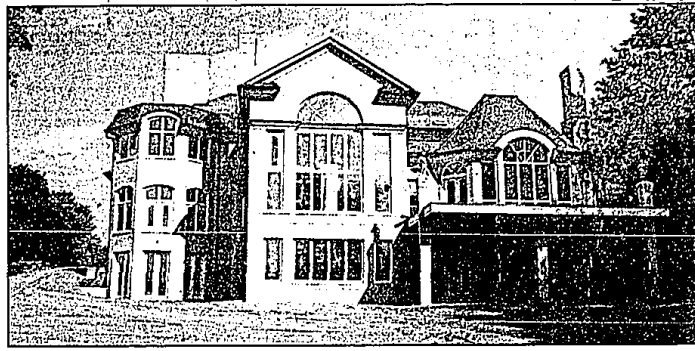
Information on steel products and their applications in residential construction will be the topic of a meeting of the Builders Association of Southeastern Michigan 6-8:30 p.m. Wednesday. Call 737-4477.

Operation condo

Wayne State University's College of Lifelong Learning will offer a class on the introduction to successful condominium association operation taught by Robert Meisner, attorney and Observer & Eccentric columnist. Offered at two sites, the class at Groves High School, Birmingham, will be held for five Thursdays beginning Oct. 14. The class at Heritage Junior High in Sterling Heights begins Nov. 11.

Meisner's topics include: legal and fiduciary responsibilities of directors and officers; potential liability incurred by directors and officers and state statutes governing condominiums. Guest speakers will supplement the lectures.

Fee is \$150 for a board member or representative, \$100 for an additional person from the same organization and senior citizens. To register, call 577-4665.



STEPHEN CASTELL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Old-world builders: Joe Gurka and Vlasta Siler specialize in spacious, historic villas like this one of some 13,000 square feet on 3 1/2 acres in Bloomfield Township.

B

uilders craft mansions to last

Builders of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra showhouse house combined old world craftsmanship with new world features. Some 30,000 people will view the house, and most likely there won't be a buyer among them.

By DOUG FUNKE
STAFF WRITER

Joe Gurka and Vlasta Siler, Bloomfield Township builders, specialize in large chateaus, villas and Tudors that carry seven-figure price tags. That's fairly unusual in and of itself. What's even rarer is that the husband-and-wife team always has a spec model in process.

Gurka and Siler's most recent mansion nearing completion and waiting for a buyer, Villa Baronna, contains some 13,000 square feet of living space on 3 1/2 acres overlooking Lower Long Lake in Bloomfield Township.

Under construction for three years, the model contains five bedrooms with their own baths, a four-room master suite, nine fireplaces, a great room, family room/solarium, a library, music/reception room, formal dining room, billiards room, game room, media room, plus a pair of attached two-car garages.

It can all be yours for \$2.9 million. "The house is so unique, we offer so much value," said Siler, a design specialist. "It's a lot of money, but still a good deal for the person who buys it."

"They're designed to look like they

have been standing a long time and (still) have all the modern conveniences," she said. "We like to strive for permanency, stay around and be enjoyed for a long time, centuries."

Gurka tends to the construction details.

"I build so someone walks in and says, 'This is one of a kind, I've never seen anything like this,'" he said. "My second goal is preservation of arts and crafts, to bring European culture for those who can afford it here."

Fine touches — plaster, tile treatments, moldings and doors — can be found throughout. Smooth-cut limestone blocks on the facade give the villa a stately appearance.

Originally from Czechoslovakia, Gurka and Siler have developed an appreciation for and specialty in large, baronial French and British-

style mansions. They've finished about a dozen since moving to Michigan from California eight years ago. The least expensive sold for \$1.4 million.

Several other spec houses sold fairly quickly at completion, Gurka said. "Houses don't sell during construction. People want to see."

Potential buyers who qualify financially and who might be interested in that lifestyle somehow seem to gravitate to them by word of mouth, Gurka said.

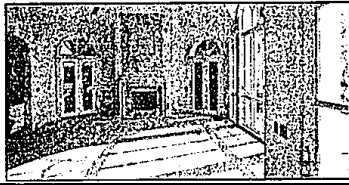
"We build them and they (buyers) come along. We don't market. A corporate owner can afford it, maybe a bank president, famous sports personality, doctors."

Neither Gurka nor Siler believe they go out on a limb when they build

See HOUSE, 2F

Opulence:

Nine fireplaces, intricate plaster work, trim and wall treatments radiate class in the Villa Baronna.



Home theater sound suffers

AP — Sophisticated video equipment available is capable of bringing theater-like quality into a consumer's home. But no aspect of setting up a home theater is more important than the sound portion of the performance.

While surround-sound has the power to produce a theater-like environment, it is often defeated by the user, according to Video Magazine.

First of all, the speakers don't have to cost a lot of money. Their location is what's most important. While the performance of the highest-priced speakers can be ruined by improper location, a moderately-priced group of speakers placed properly can produce excellent sound.

The Dolby Pro-Logic surround-sound system divides the sound into four separate channels — left, right, center and rear. Location of the speakers carrying the left, right and center channels usually isn't a problem because the sound carried by these channels is supposed to be highly directional.

For example, the voice of someone speaking in the center of the screen will be carried by the center channel. Something happening to the left, will be handled by the left speaker, etc.

Location of the speakers carrying the rear channel is where the problems start. The rear speakers should not be located directly behind the listener and pointed directly at the listener.

The job of the rear speakers in a surround-sound system is to produce broad dispersion of sound. Ideally, the sound carried by rear speakers should seem to come from all directions, but no single direction. Speakers placed behind or directly to the side of the listener and pointed directly at the listener will produce sound that seems to come from these locations — and these are not sound moves.

Instead, the speakers carrying the rear channel can be mounted high on the side walls, and aimed at the back wall. Or they can be placed a bit lower on the side walls and aimed at the back wall and aimed at the side walls.

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