

# Bed, breakfast and bygone days

## House with rich history set to become first B&B

By Sue Buck  
Staff Writer

Once the home of the Lone Ranger and of Orville Botsford, a Greek Revival house is expected to become the Farmington area's first bed and breakfast.

New owners David and Charlene Fromme of Southfield also hope that the home, located on Locust Drive, will gain final approval for entry into the Farmington Hills historic district.

The Frommes recently bought the home from Farmington public safety Officer Carl Swandarski who wanted a maintenance-free residence in a subdivision filled with children so his 5-year-old daughter would have playmates.

"We're making changes," Charlene Fromme said.

One of several changes is adding a bathroom to each bedroom to insure guest privacy. They will also add a walk to the rear of the house for a flower garden appropriate to the period and location.

The home is located in an isolated area accessible by Shilwassee, east of the Farmington Cemetery. A nameplate will be added to assist travelers.

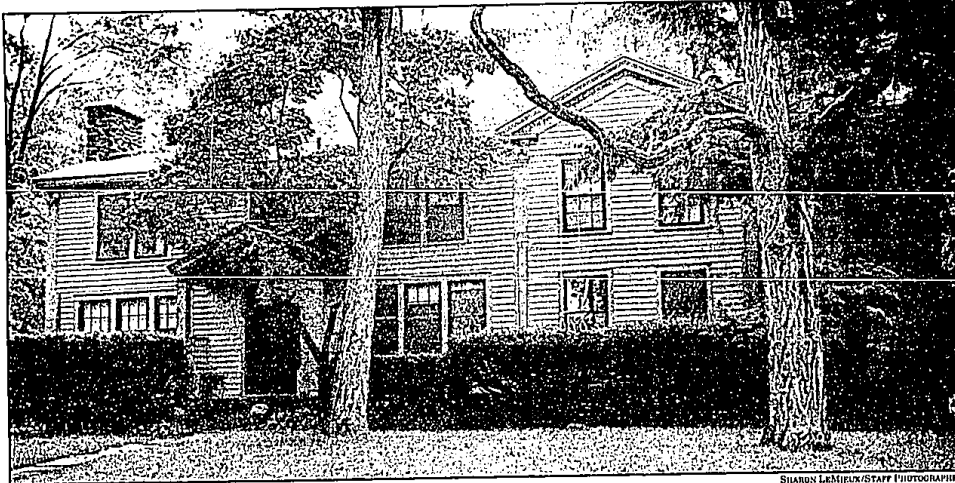
The home is situated between two Indian trails which once crossed the Farmington area: the Grand River and the Shilwassee Indian Trails.

The Grand River Trail linked Fort Pontchartrain in Detroit with settlements of the Ottawa Indians at the Grand River. The Shilwassee Trail branched off and meandered. The course of the old Shilwassee Trail traverses the rear of the property.

Curiously, the land sits in two communities. The smaller portion — part of the driveway and the septic field — is in Farmington. The area remaining, including the house, sits in Farmington Hills.

The Frommes intend to live in the home while it serves as a bed and breakfast. By Farmington Hills Zoning Board of Appeals restriction, the Frommes will only be allowed to operate the bed and breakfast on weekends. Daily use would constitute a motel or hotel use, the ZBA said.

The ZBA also restricted the Frommes to no more than three couples at a time and asked that a turnaround be provided in case someone misses the house, insur-



SHARON LEHMEK/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sleepy haunt: The Lone Ranger and Orville Botsford once called it home. New owners David and Charlene Fromme of Southfield want to turn the Greek Revival house on Locust into the first Farmington-area bed and breakfast.

ing that customers don't turn around in a neighbor's driveway.

The two-story, single family home did not require rezoning, according to Lee Blizeman, of the zoning department. It sits on 1.3 acres. Tentatively, its slogan is "A Step Back to Yesterday."

A public hearing will take place in November by the historic district commission.

David Fromme is a native of a Delaware town with a population of 3,000.

"The homes there ranged from the revolutionary period, forward, concentrating in the Victorian period," Fromme said in a letter.

"Since I moved to Michigan 28 years ago, I have missed this kind of atmosphere. (Wife) Charlene, a native Michigander, and I have traveled at bed and breakfasts to recapture some of that charm of the past. We have become firm advocates of bed and breakfasts as the most enjoyable way to travel and of meeting interesting people."

Fromme is also soliciting photos that anyone might have of the home. Call him at 336-0839.

"If ever there were communities to enjoy, the Farmingtons meet the criteria," Fromme said.

Earle Graser, the original Lone Ranger, owned the home during the late 1930s and early 1940s. For 10 years, Graser was the first Lone Ranger at WXYZ.

The more noted Bruce Beemer, whose "Hilli-Yo, Silver" enthralled 10-year-olds for several decades, was announcer for the popular program, according to historical information.

When Graser was killed in an automobile accident in April 1941, Beemer stepped into the role. Graser, 32, was five blocks from home when he struck a parked truck-trailer early one morning when he was returning home. He was survived by wife Jeane and year-old daughter Gabriel.

The Grasers dated the home to 1842.

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