

Building Inspection In The Suburbs—Local Official Tells How

(Editor's Note: As the west—Livonia, Farmington, ship—continue to grow, the ern Wayne County suburbs—in Plymouth and Redford Town—subject of proper inspection of

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new buildings continues to draw the public interest. How is it inspected? Who performs it? Richard Sanderson, chief inspector for Livonia, describes the typical suburban process in this article, which originally appeared in the September issue of B. O. C. A. News.

By RICHARD SANDERSON
PART I
ORIGIN OF BUILDING CODES

The origin of Building Codes is often cited, but because it is a part of the history of our Western Civilization, it cannot be changed. King Hammurabi, in approximately 1700 B.C., attempted to codify the many laws of the lands he had conquered. Article 229, of that code read as follows: "If a builder has built a house for a man, and has not made his work sound, and the house he built has fallen and caused the death of its owner, that builder shall be put to death."

This was the first written building code and obviously it was a prevention code.

SIMPLICITY TO COMPLICACY

To the layman, building inspection is the simple process of examining the work of a building tradesman and pointing out the corrections that must be made. To the administrator of a municipal inspection department, it has a much broader meaning. A typical medium sized (50,000 to 200,000 population) municipal inspection department enforces most of the following codes and ordinances:

1. Building Code
2. Housing Code
3. Plumbing Code
4. Electrical Code
5. Heating Code
6. Elevator Code
7. Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Code
8. Boiler and Pressure Vessel Code
9. Zoning Ordinance
10. Sign Ordinance
11. Weed Ordinance
12. Swimming Pool Ordinance
13. Junk Yard Ordinance
14. Fence Ordinance
15. Air Pollution Ordinance
16. Soil Removal Ordinance; and many other miscellaneous ordinances.

NOT A ONE MAN JOB

Obviously, no one inspector could be expected to have all the technical knowledge required to enforce these varied codes and ordinances. In most cases it is necessary to have a licensed journeyman in each trade enforce the code or ordinance that regulates the trade. The building inspector is the lone exception to this rule. Even though his background may be in carpentry or masonry, he is generally expected to enforce all of the miscellaneous ordinances assigned to the inspection department.

UNWANTED DUTIES

Often, building inspectors resent having to enforce these miscellaneous ordinances and tend to consider them secondary in importance and unworthy of their serious attention. In practice, the enforcement of the zoning ordinance and miscellaneous ordinances is vitally important to a community, even though it may seem to consume a disproportionate share of the inspectors' time.

TYPES OF INSPECTION

Basically, building inspection in the broad sense is broken down in this manner:

(a) Construction inspection,

including all of the mechanical trades, such as plumbing, electrical and heating.

(b) Zoning inspections, sometimes made as part of a construction inspection, but often in the case of land uses, as a separate inspection. (Plan examination for zoning conformity is conversion to good field enforcement.)

(c) Periodic maintenance inspection on all buildings except one and two family dwellings, and on signs, boilers, combustion equipment, air conditioning, refrigeration and elevators.

(d) Investigation of complaints. These primarily involve zoning and miscellaneous ordinances; rarely the building code itself.

BUILDERS NOT TROUBLE SOME

Contrary to popular belief, the biggest headaches to an inspection department administrator are not builders and contractors, but rather home owners and business men who are either ignorant or contemptuous of building and zoning regulations.

PART II
INSPECTION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS

Periodic inspection of existing buildings is absolutely essential for the protection of the health and safety of the public. This service can be provided in any municipality at absolutely no cost to the general public, simply by charging a nominal fee to the building owner to cover the cost of inspection. Many major cities use the fee system to finance their existing building inspection programs.

There are many benefits derived from periodic inspections and not the least of them is to the building owner. Forced preventive maintenance is not always appreciated by a building owner but it saves him money in the long run. Many shabby landlords have no other way of knowing that their buildings are in need of repair.

Periodic inspection provides a constant check on the availability and serviceability of existing facilities and fire service equipment. I.e., fire escapes, fire doors, exit signs, exit door, sprinkler system etc. It is also a good deterrent to blighty construction. A building owner is not likely to make alterations without a permit when he knows that the building inspector is going to make a thorough inspection every year.

Periodic inspection is an excellent method of combating neighborhood blight and is an effective tool in thwarting violations of a zoning ordinance.

The "Housing Code" of the State of Michigan requires annual inspection of multiple dwellings and common sense tells us that the buildings where we work, play, shop and eat, should be subject to the same inspection requirements.

Most municipalities already have an existing building inspection program. It is simply a matter of setting up the program, establishing fees and making the inspections.

In establishing fees, it should be remembered that they are not to be considered a source of general revenue but should only be large enough to cover the cost of inspections.

The most equitable base for establishing fees is the square foot. Of course allowances must be made for the different types of occupancies. Obviously it does not take as long to inspect a large open warehouse as it does a hospital or hotel.

An existing building inspection program is a valuable asset to any building department because it provides a constant supply of work and is self supporting.

A program of this type is best utilized by new growing communities as a stabilizer when new construction is slow and by older communities as the prime function of the building department.

A unique feature of this type of program is its complete flexibility. When construction work slows down, the slack can be taken up by filling in with existing building work. When construction work is at its peak, the existing building work can be set aside.

A properly administered existing building inspection program:

- Prevents deterioration of buildings.
- Prevents illegal construction.
- Prevents illegal occupancies.
- Prevents zoning violations.
- Eliminates slack work periods.
- Provides a record of building occupancies.
- Provides a constant source of revenue for Building Department support.

Any municipality that does not have an existing building inspection program is neglecting the health and safety of its citizens.

Church Bazaar Entice Early Shoppers for Christmas

"Hillo, come to the Holiday Fair" is the merry tune sung by the Woman's Society of Christian Service at First Methodist Church. Their Bazaar will be held Thursday, Nov. 5 at the church, Grand River ave. at Warner street in Farmington from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. The theme for this year's Holiday Fair is "Main Street U.S.A." and the co-chairmen, Mrs. Corwin Overton and Mrs. James Jones have been making plans since early last spring. Many circle members have been at work through the summer months preparing articles for the Bazaar.

In a pleasant walk down "Main Street U.S.A." (the lower hall of the Church School building) shoppers will find numerous shops where an unusually fine assortment of gifts and novelties can be purchased in ample time for Christmas giving. Dainty ruffled party aprons and the practical "every day" variety as well as can be found in the Apron Shoppe where Elaine Ferguson and Vicki Harlan are the proprietors.

"Dry Arrangements" will be featured by Hester Bodinus and Kathryn Gaul in their Garden Shoppe. Gladys Hogan promises an exceptionally fine assortment of needlework and knitting, with one large corner of her shops given over to Jane Humble's handsome menagerie of stuffed toys.

Every shopper is sure to find some useful item, or a trinket like Grandma had on her what-not among Mary Harrison's Attie Treasures. And, of course, no Bazaar would be complete without a festive array of gay Christmas candles; so Lou Harrison and Phyl Westbrook have been slaving over a hot stove melting down old remodeled candles that have been contributed. The results of their labors are quite elegant.

Irene West is the proprietor of the Tea Shoppe where weary "Main Street" shoppers can drop in and sit a spell and enjoy a cup of tea (or coffee) and friendly conversation too. Leona Caesar has one corner there for the purchase of delicious home-made baked goods, jellies and other goodies to be found only at a church bazaar.

After shopping up and down "Main Street" throughout the afternoon, shoppers can also "eat out" that evening, for Virginia Slagle and Mary Louise Rhodes assisted by many workers from the circles will serve a delicious holiday dinner in the dining room. Because the "Holiday Fair" dinner is very popular in the community and because the kitchen and dining facilities are limited, dinner tickets must be purchased in advance. Mrs. Leonard Slidwell (GR 4-4565) has charge of the dinner tickets.

Mrs. Thomas McCutcheon, Woman's Society President, is giving a helping hand wherever it is needed. "Holiday Fair" publicity is being handled by Mrs. Warren McKenzie and Mrs. Eugene McAdams and an open invitation is extended to come to the Holiday Fair.

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Name Four AFS Finalists From C'ville

The American Field Service, Clarenceville Committee, headed by Mrs. Warren Mills, of Livonia announced the names of the four finalists to be sent on to the National A.F.S. for final selection. Those named to represent Clarenceville were: Seniors, Linda Harrington, Deborah Johnson, and Sharon Rudman, and Junior Gerald Litwin.

Each of the seniors have selected the school program while Gerald has chosen the summer program. Each is now waiting word from the national committee meeting in New York before final plans are determined.

Other Clarenceville finalists were: Warren Berger, Suzanne Fell, Lynn Fouts, Barbara Harden, Pamela Milarch, Allen Rauscher, Linda Sunday, and Linda Thornton.

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