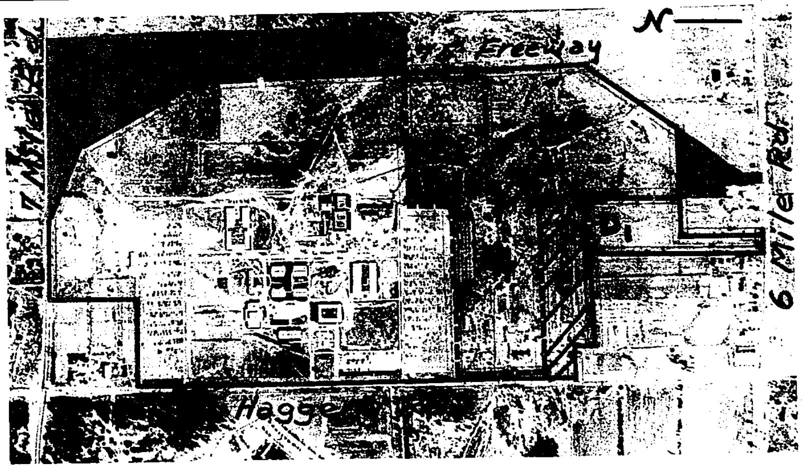
SCHOOLCRAFT COLLEGE'S boundaries moved southward in a series of land transactions in the past five years. In 1967, the college traded section A (26 acres) for Section A1 (25 acres) which had been purchased by the State Highway Department for the transaction. In the agreement, the college was given the option to buy Sections B and D if it became land-locked. The college then purchased Section C (nine acres) and made an agreement to swap Section D for Section D1 with the Trinity Baptist Church. Section D is the southern corner of the Barron property (Section B) and will be traded as soon as this property is purchased.



It Takes Land To Run College

By KATHY MORAN

ROCKING BACK in his leather chair, Ken Lindner sifts through his files on the land dealings for Schoolcraft.

The ability to barter for land swaps is hardly in Ken Lindner's job description.

But over the last five years, Lindner has put his talents to work arranging land deals that will fatten Schoolcraft College's holdings by 30 acres and save the college more than $100,000.

As Schoolcraft's vice president of business, Lindner saw the chance to turn the construction of I-275 at the college's back door into a golden opportunity.

While mapping the proposed expressway's route through Livonia, the State Highway Department found it needed 26 acres of land belonging to Schoolcraft.

The 26 acres composed the northeast section of Schoolcraft's original 139 acres. The 139 acres were purchased in 1962 for $250,000. They are located between Six and Seven Mile with frontage on Haggerty.

LINDNER KNEW that the Highway Dept. couldn't condemn the 26 acres since it doesn't hold that power over educational institutions. So it was up to Schoolcraft to sell, trade or stand in the way of the expressway.

He told then college president Eric Bradner that Schoolcraft would save money by arranging a trade with the Highway Dept. rather than selling that portion of the land and attempting to purchase land adjacent to the college on Haggerty.

Bradner and the board of trustees agreed, and in November of 1967 an agreement was reached to "exchange land needed for the highway for land needed by the college that was contiguous to and suitable for college purposes," Lindner said.

The terms "contiguous to and suitable for" are the crucial ones in the agreement because they required that the land purchased by the Highway Dept. for the swap had to be suitable for construction of college buildings.

The Highway Dept. spotted three lots facing Haggerty for the trade, but Schoolcraft had to prove "to their satisfaction that this land was necessary for our purposes and that we had use for the land because it was detached from the normal highway right-of-way," Lindner said.

With a rapidly expanding student population, this task was accomplished by showing plans for expansion.

So an agreement was reached to exchange 26 acres of college land for 25 acres of improved land. The 25 acres also included three large homes for which Schoolcraft had to pay only the total salvage cost of $7,500. The homes alone had been estimated at $20,000 to $35,000 in value.

BUT LINDNER wasn't finished.

In the agreement, he arranged for the Highway Dept. to put up over a mile of fencing along the college property that borders on the expressway. The agreement also stipulates that the department relocate all of the college's drains and sewers, put some type of identification of Schoolcraft on the expressway and let the college use any surplus dirt from the exchanged land.

Another added bonus in the agreement was the option to buy 25 acres of land also bordering the expressway IF it became landlocked. This was added because if it became landlocked it would "have no value to anyone but the college," Lindner said.

"So then we entered into Phase II which was to make the Barron property (named for the former owners) landlocked," he said.

THE COLLEGE did this by purchasing a six acre lot on Haggerty for $72,000 which includes a home that is now used for college offices.

Schoolcraft also bought the back four acres of the Newman House (also on Haggerty) from the Archdiocese of Detroit for $19,000. These purchases closed off access to the Barron property from the west side.

Lindner then went to the Trinity Baptist Church on Six Mile which had the only other property abutting the Barron land.

The church agreed to swap 4.2 acres for 5.3 acres of the Barron land if Schoolcraft bought it.

This agreement landlocked the Barron property and gave Schoolcraft room for an exit onto Six Mile.

SCHOOLCRAFT is currently negotiating for the purchase of the Barron land for 85 per cent of what the State Highway Dept. paid for it, or $161,000.

When all the deals are final, Schoolcraft will consist of 183 acres. Including a 9.5 acre site purchased in 1965 for $35,000 for a parking lot, the college has spent a total of $496,000 for land which today is valued at $1.66 million.

It has plenty of room for expansion and will use the three homes it acquired in one swap for offices.

But the savings to the taxpayer totaled in the thousands of dollars. Schoolcraft would have needed more land and would have had to spend tax dollars to improve the 26 acres which it swapped with the state highway department.

Considering property values and legal fees, Lindner said, "I think it's reasonable to assume we saved the college $100,000."

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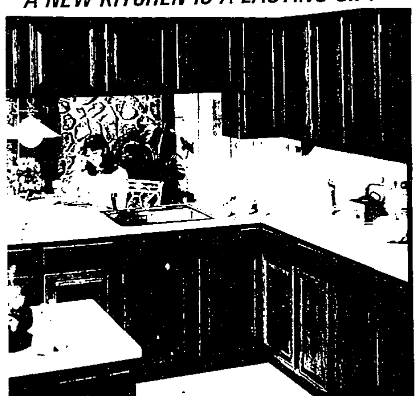

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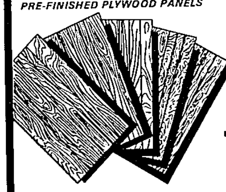

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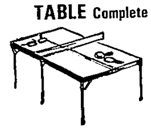

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