



Post-Bulletin Photo by Jodi O'Shaughnessy

Horse-drawn harvest

A rural Harmony farmer tosses oat bundles onto a horse-drawn wagon on Tuesday. The harvesting technique is atypical of methods being used by most other southeastern Minnesota farmers as they bring in the crop.

Historic home stands empty

No one bids for ex-state hospital house

By STEVE DAUBS
Post-Bulletin Staff Writer

It isn't Maywood or the Plummer House, but the home built for the superintendent of the Rochester State Hospital has its own page in history.

The 52-year-old stone and brick home probably was the only residence built by the Works Progress Administration in Olmsted County, said Olmsted County Historical Society Archivist Bev Hermes.

But nobody seems to be interested in owning it.

Last summer, the Rochester Parks and Recreation Department advertised for its sale and removal from the current site at 1520 E. Center St., but only one person bid for the home.

Bruce Phelps' \$102 bid was not high enough last year and the park board rejected the offer. The city instead used the home as the headquarters for the Star of the North Games.

This year the board decided to try again to sell. It probably would have taken Phelps' offer this year, said Forestry Director Denny Stotz, but no one had submitted a bid by the 11 a.m. Tuesday deadline.

The \$25,000 to \$40,000 moving cost, plus thousands more in building a new foundation, rewiring and replumbing, make even a \$102 bid look promising.

"If we get the same bid this year, we'd probably take it," Stotz said.

But it won't be from Phelps. He said he had found another nice home and is no longer interested.

Stotz said the city is primarily interested in getting the house moved to make more room for East Park and to find a use for the home.

For 42 years the brick and stone two-story home just outside the former state hospital sheltered superintendents such as Dr. Ben Smith, who moved there when the structure was completed in 1938.

Smith's widow, 91-year-old Stel-



Post-Bulletin Photo by Merle Dallen

The former residence of Dr. Frank Tyce stands empty today, awaiting a new owner. The Rochester Park and Recreation Department is at-

tempting to sell the home built for the superintendent of the Rochester State Hospital, but has found no buyers.

la Hobbs, still remembers the home.

"It was a beautiful home," she said in an interview from her Kirkwood, Mo., residence. "I liked it a lot."

She decorated the four-bedroom and 2½ baths, including a burgundy sink, toilet and tub in the downstairs bathroom. "I even had the rug to match," Hobbs recalled.

The home was built in 1937-38 during the Depression by the WPA as part of several improvements to the state hospital, according to historical society records.

While the total cost at the time was projected to be about \$20,000, the home currently is valued at \$178,200, according to county records.

The home's first floor exterior was constructed with limestone mined from the hospital's quarry. The second story was made built of red brick that had been recycled from the home of assistant superintendent at the time, Dr. O.C. Heyerdale, which had been torn down to make way for the new home.

"It's important that all lumber, brick and other materials be salvaged insofar as possible. The brick should be cleaned, the lumber should be sized and all nails removed," wrote architect Albert Larson, who supervised all the WPA activities at the hospital in a June 1937 letter to Smith.

Smith, his wife, and three children lived in the home until 1945,

when Smith resigned.

Olmsted County used the house as a meeting place after acquiring it along with other state hospital property. The county later turned the house and property over to the city for use as a park.

The home most recently was headquarters for the Star of the North Games held last month.

But it's last permanent resident was Dr. Francis Tyce, who headed the hospital for 22 years until it closed in 1980. Tyce, who still practices psychiatry in Rochester, said that although he wasn't interested in buying the home, he recalled his years there fondly.

"It's a nice, comfortable house," he said. "But it's too big for us to move into now."

County takes stiffer action in case