

Housing: Not so historic but very scarce

By KATHLEEN MONJE
Of the Emerald

Unfortunately for impoverished University students looking for a pleasant, cheap place to live, the Emerald City has been praised on national television as one of the ten most livable cities of its size in the country.

While this national reputation may be great public relations for the state and even for Eugene, it is anathema to many residents, who point out that the phrase "of its size" won't last long if an influx of livability-seeking immigrants arrives.

And for the hapless home-seeker already living here, every new arrival is a threat, competition for what few houses and apartments are available.

The most recent study of Eugene's housing shortage puts the city's vacancy rate at .9 percent — an "incredibly low figure," according to Betty Niven, who chairs the city Joint Housing Committee. An appropriate vacancy rate for a city this size would be about six percent.

Eugene's population has tripled

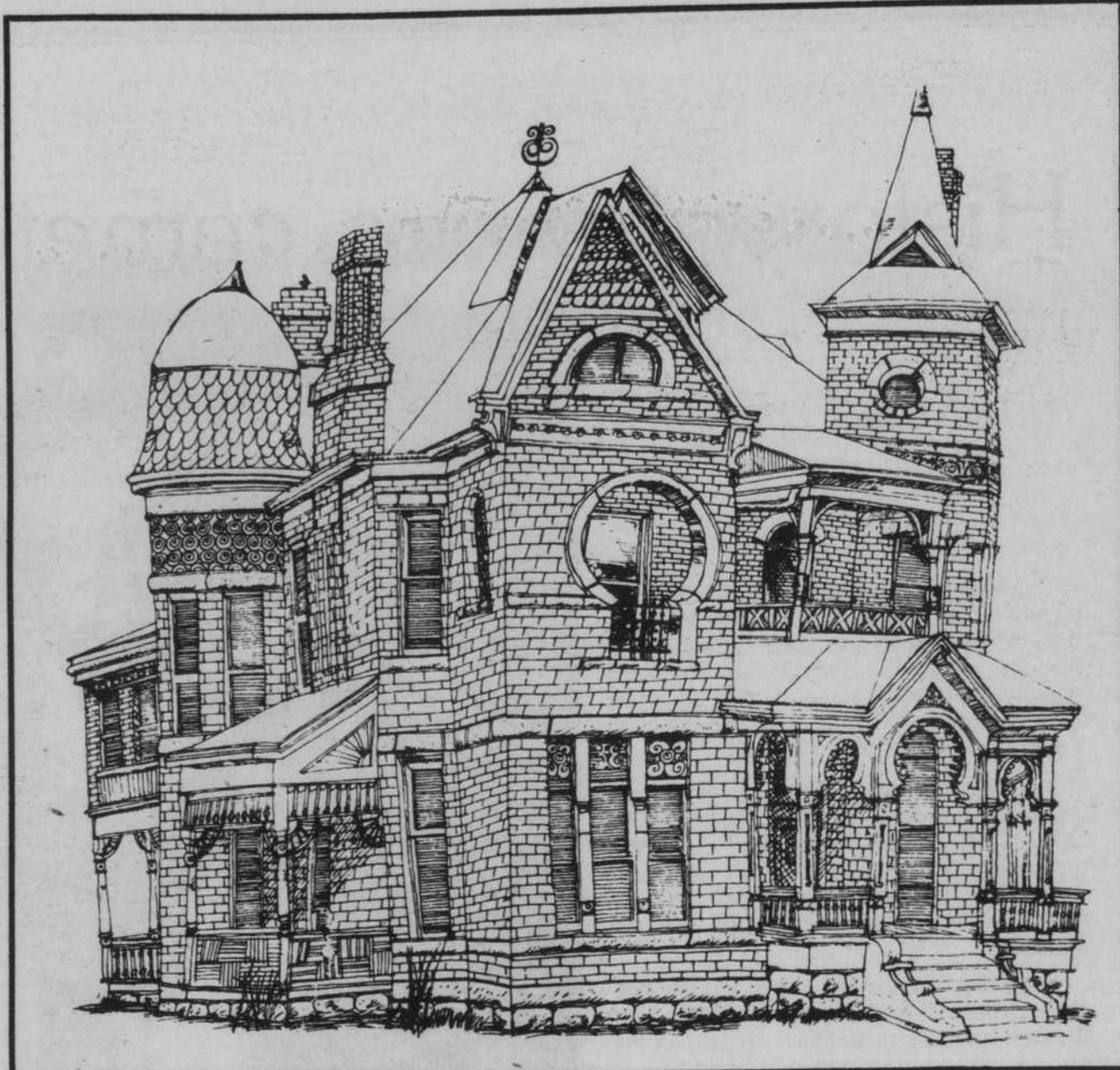
in less than 30 years, and though the growth rate is slowing down, it will be a long time before new construction comes close to meeting the housing demand.

The best way for a house or apartment hunter to combat the home scarcity is time-consuming, but generally brings results.

First, let everyone you talk to know you're looking for a place to live. Friends and acquaintances often know of someone moving, or about to move. On your side is the fact that many University students have left for the summer — June, July and August are the best times to find a new place to live.

Some of the more comfortable and better-located homes in Eugene never go on the rental market — they're inherited instead, passed on from one friend to another.

If friends or other such connections fail you, you can beat your house-hungry competitors by getting a copy of the Register-Guard as it comes off the press, about 1:30 p.m. Since many people can't or don't see the Guard's classified ad section until late afternoon, you're a step ahead.



Emerald graphic

The Emerald, although published only twice a week during the summer (Tuesdays and Thursdays) is on the stands before any other Lane County paper. It's probably the best source for people looking for a house-with-roommates situation.

The shopper-type publications available at supermarkets and shopping centers take more time to look through, as they're generally not classified, but can yield results because most house-hunters don't use them.

When you've found the place you want it's a good idea to take some precautions to avoid legal hassles, before you move in.

Most landlords and -ladies want a clean-up and damage deposit as well as a rental (last month) deposit. The best way to insure getting it back when you leave is to tour the empty house or apartment with the owner, making a list of existing conditions. If both parties sign the list, there can be no

doubt at a later date.

The ASUO off-campus housing office in Suite 3 of the EMU has an inventory list designed for renters. Off-campus housing can also tell you what other legal responsibilities renters and owners have, so you'll know exactly what to expect from the landlord or -lady.

History

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Amid rumors that the cemetery owners wanted to move the graves and develop the land, Rees says a historic zoning would keep the ground intact.

Once a building is designated a historic site the owners cannot alter the structure's exterior or land in any way, she says. The owners would be eligible to receive special benefits from the city in the way of financial and other reliefs, however.

"A lot of people object to our zoning laws now, so they'd probably object to a historic designation even worse," she says.

The incentives to preserve historic places led to a new awareness about the city's history, Rees says.

"I think people are more aware of what we have here because of our efforts," Rees says. "Eugene, next to Portland, has probably the best preservation program in the state."



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