

What Buyers Should Watch In Old Houses

Most people approach the purchase of any kind of house with a great deal of caution. The average person buys a home only once or twice during his entire life, and usually it is the largest single investment he ever makes.

With upwards of \$15,000 being committed, it's no wonder the average family takes the plunge with vague feelings of anxiety. This insecurity is diminished for the fortunates buying a new home—in the same way a new car buyer has less to worry about than the fellow taking his chances in the used car market.

Bunt everyone can't buy a new home.

With construction costs spiraling, a middle income family with four or more children frequently is unable to afford a custom-built home and has trouble finding a house large enough in builder developments. These tract homes are designed for the mass market and most have only three bedrooms.

With slim pickings among new houses, the big family usually must search for shelter in old neighborhoods. Here the prices decline (sometimes) but the hazards, real and imagined, increase.

The most reassuring thing to remember about buying an old home is that there is a remedy for every defect in a structure—all the way up to razing the old frame and building a new home on the foundation.

In examining a prospective purchase, what you are trying to determine is exactly how many defects you will have to correct and how much this will cost. If the buying price is adjusted to take care of the necessary repairs, you may get a bargain even if several thousand dollars worth of repair work must be done.

What you must guard against is the possibility some of these repair bills come as a surprise. It's the unexpected expenses which turn the apparent bargain into a white elephant.

For most people, the only reasonable protection on this score is professional advice. Do not make your final decision without an inspection by some competent person with no stake in the sale. In many areas, engineering inspections are routinely performed for a fee in the \$50 range. If there's no company in your city doing this work, find a contractor willing to do it.

Here are some guidelines which a prominent New York architect, Herman H. York, suggests for your own inspection and that of the professional you hire:

THE HOUSE

Look for dampness and termites. Look for large open or patched up cracks. Fine plaster cracks, incidentally, are the result of normal settling and are not important.

Look for sagging floors or girders.

Check the electrical system. Anything today with less than 100 amp. service is not sufficient.

Check force of water in faucets. A good pressure indicates pipes which have not corroded.

THE PLOT

How close is the house to prop-

erty lines? If an empty lot is next door, can somebody build a house closer than you would like to have it?

Does the property drain well? Are there sewers? If not, does the private sewage system work properly? Are there any peculiar odors around the house sewer indicating possible difficulty?

Do the rain water downspouts drain properly?

What is the condition of the concrete or masonry walks and driveways?

Do any trees need attention? Tree work or removal is expensive.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Ride around in your car in a wide area at various times of the day to check traffic, kind of neighbors, amount of noise, railroad noises, airport noises.

Check on schools, not only where they are but whether they are of high standards.

Determine whether the neighborhood is on the up or downgrade. In most old areas, the chances are it is going downward, but how fast?

Watch out for industrial or commercial encroachment near your house. Can somebody build a gas

Front Porch Era Passes

There was a time in America when folks liked to "set" out on the front porch and watch the neighbors go by.

Now we call it "outdoor living," and the area consigned to it usually is in the rear or side of the house rather than the front.

Privacy, it seems, is what most people want nowadays.

Did you ever think of moving your front porch to conform to this new idea of living?

If you have a side or back entrance to the house, the project is less complicated. But a window can be converted into a door so that your new porch can go wherever you want it.

Unlike your old front porch, make the new one more square-shaped instead of long and narrow, to accommodate tables and chairs.

For safety, it should be level with the room it adjoins; and for maximum use in summer and winter it should be covered. You can either use roofing to match the roof of your house, or one of the many colored corrugated plastics with composition glass.

Either casement or awning windows that can be opened from floor to ceiling are best for giving the new porch-room a greater outdoor effect.

LIQUID MASKING HELPS

Painting window shashes and frames is neater and quicker if you mask the window panes. Masking tape is good, and even wet newspapers will suffice. But the latest method is to use liquid masking material which peels off paint streaks with it.

station or a supermarket across the street? Check zoning.

OTHER TIPS

Never offer the seller what he asks for the house. The asking price always is higher than the selling, particularly if you are dealing directly with the owner.

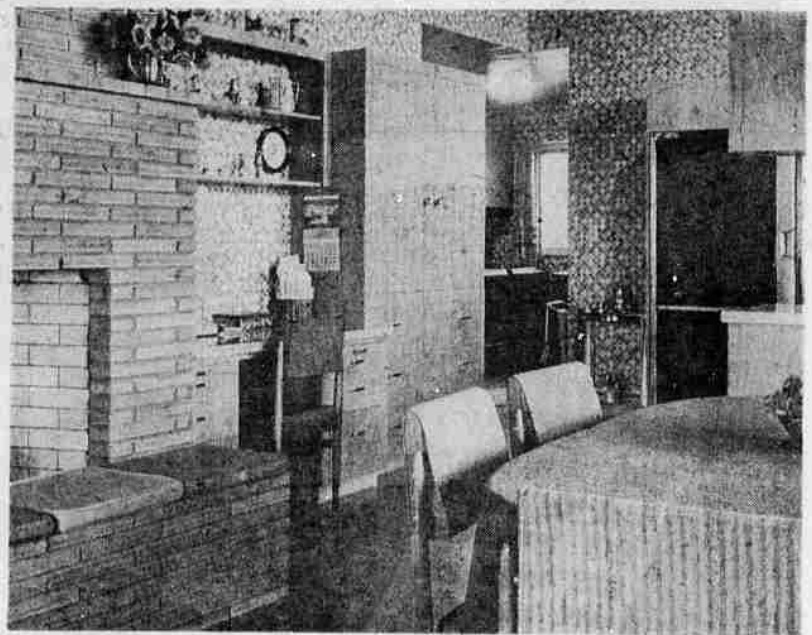
Also, it is most important to agree with the seller as to exactly what is included in the sale. Get this put down in writing at the first conference. Often when a sell-

er knows you are interested, he changes his mind about including some of the things he offered. Carpeting is such an item; laundry equipment, garden tools, television aerial, screens, and similar things are all items which he can remove before you move in. Come to a firm understanding regarding all of these items.

One final point architect York emphasizes: Do not select a

house which is in a neighborhood populated by people who are considerably above your economic level. Regardless of whether you can put a large amount of cash into the house—thus making it easy to meet the monthly payments—keeping up with those around you can be expensive. Your house has become a status symbol. Stay within your means.

HERALD AND NEWS, Klamath Falls, Oregon Thursday, Feb. 23, 1961 Page 2



DINING AREAS in many new homes are a focal point for family living as is this one, taken in a local home. A high hearth provides extra seating behind modern dining furniture. Space is used to advantage with built-in desk and storage cabinets. This area with adjoining kitchen and utility room is done in wood paneling and matching wall paper.

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