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Clarke gains experience, money from house project



INSIDE -- Rob Clarke nails on the edging of the halfpaneling in one of the bedrooms. All of the walls have new plasterboard. The small house has two bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen-dining room and half basement.

Rob Clarke has an unusual homework assignment -- he is rebuilding a house.

Since last summer, the Cass City High School senior has been working on a house at Sherman and Pine

In the process, he has been doing the neighborhood a favor. It never was much to look at and it became a downright eyesore after it was heavily damaged in a fire in January of last year.

The impetus for the project was Rob's desire for a summer job and a joint desire by him and his father, Lyle, to undertake a home rebuilding project.

They started looking for a house and discovered the one that they purchased when they spotted a "for sale" sign when driving by. The owner, David Laber of Snover, had been renting it out at the time of the fire.

Lyle Clarke, agriculture teacher at Cass City High School, paid \$5,000 for the

Although he has helped on occasion, the project has otherwise entirely been Rob's, who is being paid by

Rob worked on the house

through last summer and Clarke replaced. since the school year started, for two hours each afternoon as a co-op student, and on Saturdays. He hopes to have the project done in May or June.

"It was a total wreck," he said of its condition when he started. "It was a mess."

Most of the damage was in a back room, where the fire started. The room, an addition to the original house. was torn down and not replaced. What's left of the small house consists of a combination kitchen-dining room, bathroom and two bedrooms.

The south end of the house suffered mainly smoke and water damage. There was a lot of damage to the ceiling on the other end, plus the kitchen cupboards were

The small home appears to have been built in three parts, with the first part constructed in the early

The field stone foundation includes a basement on one end, accessible from the

All the foundation needed was some mortar in the cracks, except for one missing section where the back bathtub, which was still room was added, which Lyle

fire were intact. Those that weren't were replaced, along with the ceiling where

it was damaged. Both the ceiling and walls were insulated.

On the outside, aluminum siding was placed over the three-quarter inch thick imitation brick siding. New plasterboard went over the

The roof was torn down to the original roofboards, over was with the electrical work which was placed plywood and then new shingles. Working on the roof was physically the hardest part of the job, Clarke said.

The original oak floors were not in good enough condition to retain, so over them was placed chip board, covered with either linoleum or carpet, depending on the

New windows were installed, new wiring put in --"tedious," Clarke said -- and new cupboards, which he built himself. A new gas furnace and plumbing have been or will be installed.

About all that remains of the original house are the two outside doors, which were refinished, and the

The studs away from the lience prior to starting the pentry class in school, helphome on Cemetery Road during the past 10 years and building several 4-H projects, including a small sail-

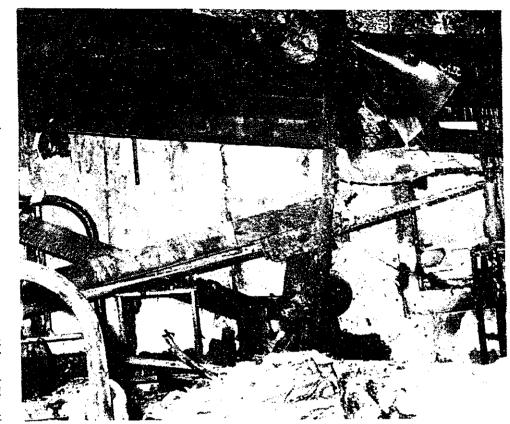
> "Most of it you can figure out without any problem,' he said. One area where he did get stuck a few times and those problems he solved with some advice from an electrician.

He did flunk the first electrical inspection by the county inspector, so had to

Once he is finished with the house, his father will either sell it or rent it out.

mind" rebuilding another house some day. He may do some cabinet work this summer, after which he will start attending Michigan Christian College at Rochester. After two years there, he plans to transfer to university and study mechanical engineering.

As for his now almost completed project, he explained, "The experience has been very beneficial.'



A TOTAL WRECK - "It was a total wreck. It was a mess," said Rob Clarke of the house before he started rebuilding it. This is what he faced. Photo was taken the day after the Jan. 3. 1979 fire.



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BEFORE -- Firemen had to contend with zero degree temperatures Jan. 3, 1979, when they fought the blaze at the home then occupied by Ruby Hartsell and two sons at the corner of Sherman and Pine Streets. Cause was never



A DIFFERENT VIEW -- The home rebuilt by Rob and Lyle Clarke looks quite different from what it did before the fire, when it was covered with brick pattern asphalt

The state of the s

