

# Ford's Old Home Taken Off Market

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., Aug. 12 (UPI)—Until this morning, you could have bought President Ford's boyhood home for \$9,000, and that might have been around \$8,900 too much. But no longer.

The house at 649 Union St., which Mr. Ford occupied for seven years after his mother came to Grand Rapids and married Gerald R. Ford Sr., came off the sales lists today at the orders of the Veterans Administration.

The VA owns the house, which has stood vacant for five years in a poor, mostly black, neighborhood in the city's southeast side. The VA took over the property when the last owner defaulted on his mortgage.

The selling price was \$9,000 plus about \$500 for taxes and insurance. But even that drew no takers.

An agent for the VA said the only offer it received was \$100.

The Fords occupied the

building during the years the future President was an all-star athlete at nearby South High School.

Now its windows are smashed, its porch screen ripped and rotting, and its tiny, weed covered lawn cluttered with debris.

Most of the old Ford neighbors have long gone.

But the VA said it was taking the house off its sales list to prevent any speculators from buying the three-story, four bedroom

home—"and taking advantage of the situation."

A spokesman said the VA would like to turn the home over to a historical society or any other interested similar group.

"From a real estate standpoint," a property manager for the VA's local agent said, "it's not a salable neighborhood."

By that, he meant partly that the area has a high crime rate.

The home's last owner, Ethel Henderson, said she sold the house five years ago because she feared burglary.

"Gobs of people came to take pictures of the old Ford house last fall when he became Vice President," said Sylvia English, 78, who still lives in the neighborhood and remembers the Fords. "But nobody has come around lately."

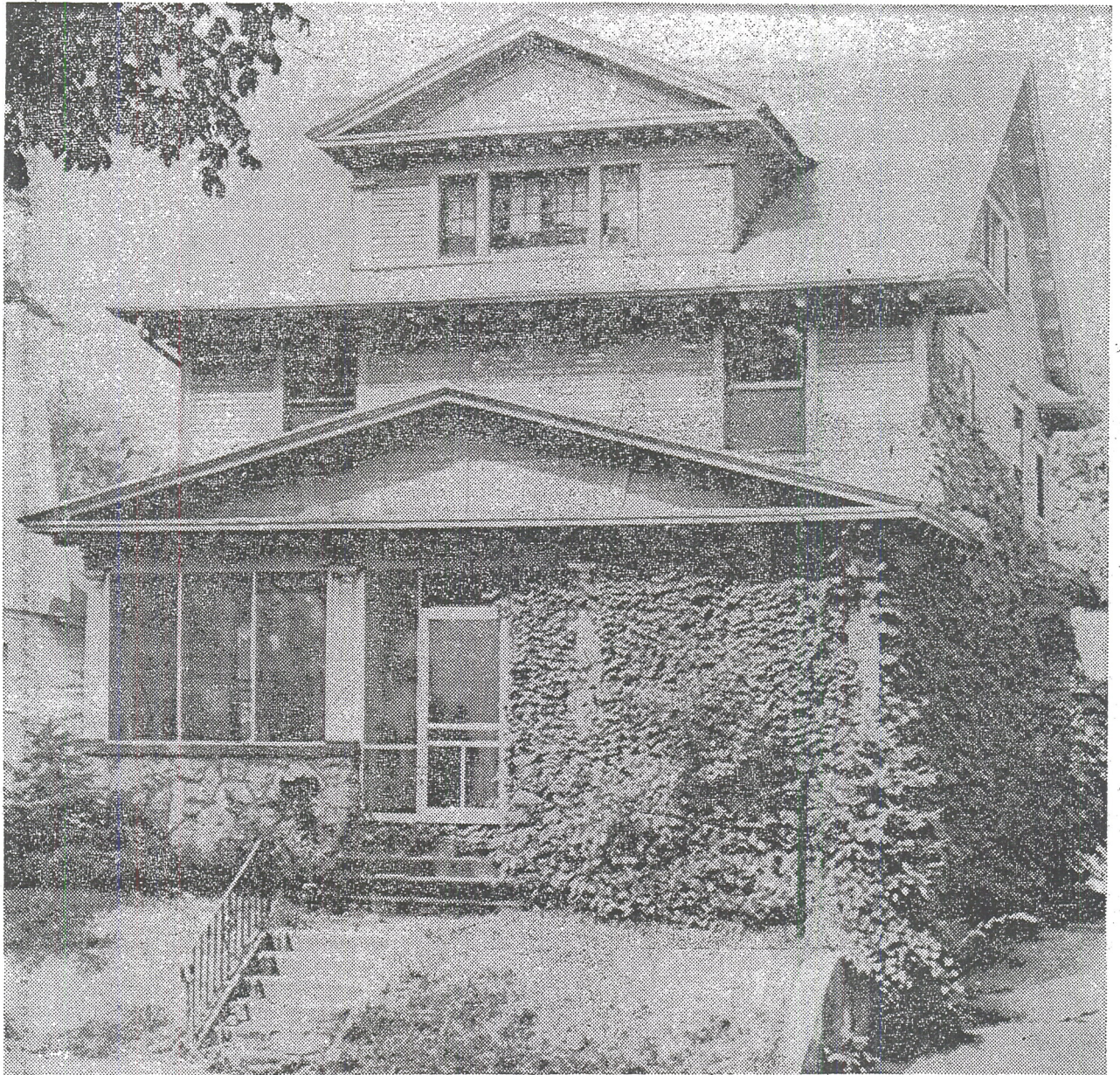
"They ought to make it some kind of shrine," said Rosie Sylvester who has lived next door since 1966. "It would certainly help increase property values."

Mrs. Henderson said she paid \$13,000 for the old Ford home in the early 1950s. She said she was the first black to live in the neighborhood.

"It was a beautiful home," she said. "But when I go by now and see what bad shape it's in, it just makes me sick."

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Gerald R. Ford's original home in Grand Rapids, Mich. The house has been vacant for five years.