

## Bloomfield

By MARY ISABEL DAVIS

To one who has come to know Bloomfield Hills only in recent years, and taken for granted all its modern development, it is almost impossible to believe that this community, now an incorporated village with its own bank, church, and police department, not so long ago was but a large section of farmland with a few scattered farmhouses here and there among its hills. Fifty years ago, in 1878, its only inhabitants were pioneers, or their direct descendants, who in the general exodus westward, realizing the agricultural possibilities of Bloomfield, settled there. Even at that early date, however, its existence as a growing community was noticeable, for the "History of Oakland County" published the preceding year, makes special mention of the district as follows:

"Although this little cluster of dwellings is in no sense a village, it perhaps merits a brief separate notice.

"We have already seen that its first inhabitant was Judge Amasa Bagley, who came in 1819, and from him and his log tavern the locality became pretty generally known as 'Bagley's'.

"His public house was superseded in 1832 by a frame tavern built by William Morris, his son-in-law, in the southwestern angle of the roads, where it is still standing. During its existence it has often been the place of holding public meetings and merry-makings.

In 1827, eight years after the settlement of the aforementioned first inhabitant, who filled the dual role of judge and tavern keeper in a community which fortunately or unfortunately lacks both, came the designation of Bloomfield Township, as distinct from the rest of the county. Since Bloomfield Hills proper is contained in and includes the greater part of the section, the creation of the new township had a far-reaching effect upon its subsequent government. Township meetings were first held in the tavern, but on its closing were removed to the school house, as for some reason the township never decided to erect a town hall.

Ten or twelve years after the creation of Bloomfield Township, saw the first development of business, when George Morris erected a brick and pottery making works on the east side of the old plank road. Across from the tavern, perhaps it should be mentioned, on ground hallowed by the first Methodist camp meeting ever held in the state of Michigan in 1828.

These works were later purchased by John Daines, who with a machine of which he was the inventor, also began the manufacture of drain tile. After his death the last of his various successors, Alanson Piersoll was forced to close the works in 1873. The most flourishing business of all that thrived and died at Bloomfield Center was a distillery, operated by William Morris and his successors until the late seventies. Whisky could be purchased for 50 cents a gallon, and Bloomfield Hills' chief claim to fame was the loudness and wildness of the brawls and "merry-makings" at the once celebrated, but now forgotten, tavern. In those days it was by no means a place where one could escape from the noise and excitement of the city. There was no vigilant police force to "make the world safe for autocracy."

Each passing year saw changes among the inhabitants—some of the old pioneers had migrated elsewhere, and there were constant new arrivals. We note with regret, about 1835, the departure of one Daniel Ferguson to Genesee County. "He had the reputation of a skillful hunter and claimed that in his day he had killed fully a thousand deer; also

## When Business Didn't Rush So



While the subject of "Birmingham's Largest Store" might provoke an endless argument today, the matter was scarcely given second thought 50 years ago at the dawn of The Eccentric's career: Hugh Irving's Hardware store was conceded this title without much discussion.

Whether it was the variegated appearance of the front porch show cases evident in the photograph, or the tremendous stock of

plows, patent medicines, bird seeds and gas stoves on the inside which gained the coveted name is not known. Suffice it to say, Irving's store had everything from all metal wheelbarrows to hair-springs for bejeweled watches.

The establishment once stood near Mitchell's old grocery store on the approximate present day location of Huston's Hardware company. As will be noted from the photograph, The Eccentric of-

ices were "next to the largest store in town," a location deemed propitious by its publishers.

The man at the extreme right of the photo is Charley Brush, former school teacher and father of "Con" and "Al" Brush, well known Detroit business men today.

Across the street Lyman Peabody ran a general store which stocked everything Hugh Irving didn't.

that, at a single shot and with a single ball, he had made eight holes in a deer's hide. We are unable to give his explanation of the manner in which so unusual a feat was performed," states the "History of Oakland County." Among these later settlers, Samuel and George Piersoll, Jacob Vaughn, Ralph Chittenden, Dennis Kelly, Thomas McGraw, and many others we find some whose descendants have retained their same property up to the present time. The latter of these, Thomas, was a member of the legislature at the time of the discussion of the removal of the state capitol, and being also a member of the house committee, recommended Bloomfield Center as an excellent place for the new seat of government. Upon his being somewhat scathingly requested to describe the location of the place he had so highly recommended, he was unable to give more definite information than that it was "three-fourths of a mill worth of Morris' will."

The first school house was a small frame structure, built about 1850 on the southeast corner of the crossroads, from where it was subsequently removed to the site of the present C. C. Winningham house. It was not until 1903 that the present brick structure was built on the west side of Woodward avenue, although a new building had long been needed. It was erected on the arrival of Charles Stinchfield, who with Milton Conklin was the first to recognize the possibilities of Bloomfield for residential purposes.

It so happened that Mr. Stinchfield was trustee of the Whitney estate which being assessed in Bloomfield paid for more than two thirds of the school for the community, which was now required to raise only \$500 for its erection. Soon after Mr. Conklin and Mr. Stinchfield, came George A. Booth, William T. Barbour, John T. Shaw, who all built estates; the former on Lone Pine road, and the latter two on the west side of Woodward avenue

near the Center. It was with the founding of these old places that Bloomfield Hills began to take on the semblance of the aspect of what later it was to become. As the property gradually became more developed others perceived the possibilities of the section. Among the next newcomers were Edwin S. George who built on Long Lake road, Walter Thompson and Frank Bromley who bought property on Adams road. A few years later came John Endicott, William and John Vhay, Manly Davis, John Donnelly and Walter Morley, most of whom still own at least a portion of their original property.

Last year came perhaps the greatest step in the history of Bloomfield Hills: its incorporation as a village. It was incorporated because its residents wished to keep it as it is, a rural community, to prevent unscrupulous subdivision and the spread of business. A petition for a charter was signed by a majority of freeholders, the charter was drawn up, signed by Luther D. Allen, William T. Barbour, William Story, Harry Wallace, and George Rhoads. It was then submitted to and signed by Gov. Alex. J. Grosbeck on Nov. 22, 1926. Two months later on Jan. 24, 1927, the district of Bloomfield Hills became Bloomfield Hills Village, encompassing all property north and south between Quarton and Hickory Grove roads, and east and west between the Lasher road and the east line of sections 11, 14 and 23. The following officers were elected: Luther D. Allen, president; Thomas Taliaferro, George Rhoads, Harry Wallace, and Matthew B. Whittlesey, commissioners. William Story was appointed clerk.

Care is being taken to preserve a certain uniformity of architecture at the Center, and both the Barbour building and the Fox and Hounds Inn carry out the best English tradition, the latter is an almost exact replica of the old English Inns. Most of the houses throughout the district are Eng-

lish in spirit. Perhaps it is only natural as the country in general, bears close resemblance to the gently rolling hills of Kent and Sussex with their streams, woodlands, and winding roads. Very like the old English estates is that of George G. Booth with its splendid Tudor House, its lawns and gardens, and surrounding buildings. Set well back from the road the high walls, old trees, and dense planting make it a place of beauty from without as well as within. The estate even boasts a Greek Theater where outdoor performances are held in summer.

The chief beauty, perhaps, of all the houses in the Hills is the extensive and well-kept grounds around them, no where are the houses crowded too closely together to spoil privacy. New roads are being constructed; new houses built in astonishing numbers, at the present time there are ten in the process of completion, and plans have already been made by the commission for the annexation of all land two miles west and half a mile north of the present boundaries.

From a little tavern at the cross roads, where drivers of sheep and cattle coming down from up state used to put up for the night, the section has become one of the most beautiful country residential districts in Michigan.

### WE HEARD IT SAID BY—

H. T. ELLERBY  
Village President

"I do not look for much of an increase in area in Birmingham in the next five years but I believe the population in 1933 will approximate 20,000 or an increase of about 8,000 over that of today. This estimate is based upon the growth in the past, statistics issued by public utility companies and with a consideration of the growth of both Detroit and Pontiac."