

## Present Village Commission



The present Birmingham village commission composed of seven members is pictured above. From left to right they are, seated, Commissioners W. W. Henry, Lee A. White, President H. T. Ellerly, Commissioner Hope F. Lagren and Scott Horsey. Standing, H. J. McBride at the left and Laurence Hulbert.

## REAL ESTATE ACTIVITIES PHENOMENAL

"Of the several factors which have contributed to the rapid growth of Birmingham, real estate development must be conceded an important place, with the improvement of the school system second," asserted Charles A. Bingham, president of the Birmingham real estate board.

Less than 20 years ago Birmingham was a village of perhaps 1200 souls, four corners, a handful of stores and a main street. Its significance, then, with respect to adaptability as a 'home town,' was on or below a par set by hundreds of other small Michigan villages. Intrinsically the land might have been as desirable then as it is now, but it needed general development, not in itself, but in environment, just as a picture, artistically framed, seems more beautiful. But the picture has not changed.

Today the four corners remain, augmented, it is true by many, many others of slightly lesser magnitude. The 1200 souls have grown to 12,000; the 'handful of stores' have multiplied tremendously, and the only thing that has decreased in size is the width of the main street! Once almost 140 feet from curb to curb (and no curbs), thinking merchants who planned new businesses along the frontage felt that Woodward avenue through Birmingham was entirely too wide, and with the building of their new stores took steps to right the wrong by establishing a new building line, finally bringing the thoroughfare down to its present transverse dimension.

Today Birmingham is far above its rivals of old. Today the treasure that once lay buried under its square mile of area has been unearthed, exposed, and new square miles have been added for new treasure hunts which hold

great promise. Today Birmingham leads the field in one's search for Michigan's most desirable residential community. No other community in the state can extend such allurements to prospective home-builders. Birmingham's pride is no hollow hauteur. Men have labored, in years that have passed, to unfold the natural magnificence of the village before the very eyes of home-hungry Michiganders, have torn aside every vestige of obscurity, have made a veritable Mecca of proletarian brick.

Astounding as the growth of the past five years alone has been we must realize that the future holds much in Birmingham's history. Conjectures, unless based upon past fact and present logic, are all too likely to be mere rash assumptions of the weightless variety. Because real estate development has played so decisive a part in village welfare during the past few years it is only natural to turn to the Real Estate board of Birmingham for prophecies of our future and justification for our past.

Says Mr. Bingham, "Real estate has, without a doubt been a big factor in the rapid growth of Birmingham. Without the centralization of realty interests about this district, the village could not have seen such remarkable development as has been its good fortune during the past few years.

"Few people realize, in full extent, the service real estate organizations may prove to a community. Village administration methods will not always take care of the necessity of fixing restrictions within the bounds of definite areas which would make desirable residence sites. Hence, and quite naturally, residential development within these limits is slow, for home owners must be

certain that undesirable building will not take place near their property. Upon the shoulders of real estate organizations who may undertake the development of this property falls the responsibility of fixing these very necessary restrictions. There is but one of the many services gained through such channels.

"Five years ago the population of Birmingham was approximately 4500. Today, according to latest figures, there are some 12,000 persons living within the village limits, and it is perfectly plausible to estimate that the next five years will see this figure over the 20,000 mark. It is likewise a logical assumption to estimate that Birmingham's ultimate population will not exceed 50,000 for several very practical reasons. In the first place almost all of the good land has been taken up and is being developed. By 'good land' I mean land that is within reasonable distance of the community center, or land that is within present village limits. To the north this land is limited by Bloomfield Hills village, to the south by Royal Oak and the Beverly Hills development; to the east it is not probable that the present limits will be much changed, while westward Lasher road is most likely to mark the ultimate limit. An estimate of the possible residential sites within this area will show why we have taken 50,000 as the eventual population limit. Birmingham should have reached this figure within the next twenty five years.

"With this as our guide we can foresee various improvements necessitated by the influx of new residents. Schools and churches must play an important part in this improvement program, it is true, but for actual development of the land upon which these new

homes are to rise we must look to real estate organizations for the initiative.

"Environment is an influential factor in the fixing of real estate values. The proximity of Bloomfield Hills with its expanse of large estate development has done much to enhance Birmingham values. Detroit has been moved nearer through highway improvement, and this too, has helped values here. In the west, Franklin Village with its natural beauty is destined to be coveted ground both because of its inherent value and because of the proximity of Birmingham as a community center.

"Industry can never find a place in Birmingham. It is a matter of history that early founders fully intended that industry should be the basis of future growth, and even in the name given the village their earnestness is shown. But public sentiment today, and for the past many years, has offered no support to these pioneering intentions, and it is impossible to foresee industrial development here at any time in the future. Birmingham is to be strictly for residences of a distinctive type.

"Some people feel that the boom of two and three years ago is likely to repeat itself. We believe such a thing most improbable simply because real estate values must adjust themselves after recent upheavals before further marked rises can occur. Sudden increases which have amounted to a practical doubling of values in the past two years alone are entirely out of proportion, and mark a far too rapid rise in so short a space of time. Of course given time to gain equilibrium, values will slowly and logically mount, but not in 'boom formation.'"