While Birmingham has in the last decade marched ahead toward progress at a great rate of speed, property values also leaped and present prices have become wealthy by investments in real estate. In few places in Michigan have the sales continued to increase at so rapid a pace.

Older residents, who have lived in Birmingham, are amazed at the reports of the great amount of money involved in the purchase of property which a few years ago seemed to have but an uncertain value.

Birmingham is strictly a residential community and does not have a city proper. The sales are made for home sites and for business purposes. Today in downtown Birmingham there are buildings under construction with a valuation of almost a half million dollars. Other conditions are contemplated, it is expected that next fall will see an entirely different line of business, where small frame structures not be many years ago housed all the business in the vicinity.

From the books of Village Treasurer Charles Plominet come an interesting story of increase in valuation. Assisted valuations for the year show an increase of 157 per cent greater as the months go by.

The total assessed valuation in the past 10 years has increased at $3,000,000 or three times its figure in 1921. New assessments are contemplated as many of the present assessments are considered low.

The total valuation as listed in 1921 was $2,500,000; in 1923, $3,125,000; $4,500,000 in 1925; $5,000,000 in 1927; $6,000,000 in 1929; $7,000,000 in 1931; and $8,000,000 in 1933. Mr. Plominet believes that there will be an increase of at least $1,000,000 in property valuation during the year. Conditions continue as in the past five years, the market being much firmer,

Property on Woodward avenue, as well as other locations in the neighborhood, is bringing a rising price in value. The First State Bank at Woodward and East Maple Street, which was assessed at $11,000 in 1921, and at $12,000 in 1923, for 1925, the Woodward and East Maple Street property has increased in value, according to tax reports. Other assessments made at $12,000 in 1921, have now assessed at $20,000 and are in the neighborhood.

A residence on Woodward, 1222 East, 6th blocks north of Maple was assessed in 1921 at $11,000, but in 1925 $21,000. The property on Southfield road, 1000, Southfield and 7th blocks in value, a certain piece of property increased in 1963 at $2,200 and is now assessed at $3,500.

The past 25 years have shown a rapid increase in population. The 1920 census showed 2,760, but it is estimated that the present population is approximately 8,000. Birmingham is a village of 2,000 in 1925; 2,500 in five years; the population will be 3,000 in 1930, and probably 3,500 persons.

The task of maintaining the government is naturally increasing as the property increases. However, taxes are kept at such a level as to allow for a general debt improvement which is insufficient for the general welfare, and are supported by the Village budget. The Village budget shows $319,114 as financed in 1931, $577,482 in budget.

1927. The total assessed area: general expense, 1928, $411,430; general expense, 1929, $549,777; highway expenses, 1929, $27,823; salaries and sinking fund 1929, $5,054; special assessment for street improvements, $2,415; burial fund 1929, $6,315; library 1929, $1,142; and water 1928, $9,300; 1917, $5,550.

Heavy rains in the spring of 1925 caused a flood near Round Park cemetery on Woodward avenue about three miles south of Birmingham. The water backed up in the hollow north of the cemetery, setting there, and remained in a flood condition for two days. In spite of the heavy water, railway cars ran according to schedule, although all passengers were forced to walk for about 15 rods along the railroad. The equipment for the steam tracks being so high that the water did not cover it. A flood in Birmingham that occurred several years later before the railroad system provided adequate drainage.

WHEN THE FIRST CAR ARRIVED

"All kinds of people—men, women, and children from all over the country gathered in the streets of Pontiac on that memorable day in 1897, to see the first electric street car."

It was Noble Gravelin speaking. Mr. Gravelin is the oldest motorman in the Detroit United Lines in point of service. Today we had been driving street cars on the Detroit Pontiac line for 22 years, through the time when traffic was unheard of and the travel between the two cities met practically no opposition.

"Today the roads are jammed with humanity, with a steady eight cars running on the Pontiac line."

Mr. Gravelin is still a motorman on the line. In all the time he has been here, he has not had an accident.

"I live at 215 Perrin street, Pontiac."

"In the early days of street cars, I was not so well off. I began to meet the cars as they came into the village from the north and with the aid of a #18 ticket issued a#18 ticket I pull them over the hill by the power house. Later, in 1897, the power house was put in operation that furnished the power for the cars.

Woodward avenue today is a superhighway, one of the largest highways in the world. In 1897 when the cars were started, it was merely a road with cows and chickens and occasional hobo and man. Where the modern homes stand there were farm houses and barns and haystacks.

"Where today we have heavy traffic to contend with, in those days our biggest problem was to keep the cows off the tracks so the cars could maintain their schedule."

Mr. Gravelin said, "I remember one time a motor man pulled my car as they were being driven home from pasture. The biggest problem today seems to be the women drivers." He smiled. "Don't know what they will do."

"I was an old man when they came into Pontiac. It was the first year when they came into Pontiac and the cars were running. I was coming along at a great speed late in the evening. It was thundering and lightning. I had to stop some storage air. I was going around to put the air in and brakes. I saw the cow catcher rolling into the street. I saw a eight-year-old sitting there in the pouring rain and hanging on for dear life."

"I went all out and I didn't have any way to get home."

Mr. Gravelin also recalled the flowing well of cold, clear water on the site of the present car barns. People used to come in from Detroit and Pontiac and enjoy a long refreshing drink of this water. Many would bring containers and take large quantities of it back home with them.

"The darn cars!"

That the advent of the street cars was not welcomed by every body in Birmingham is evidenced by the following anecdote, which has been handed down as stark truth, and as such is quoted here:

Judge Partridge was justice of the peace in the village at the time, and perhaps because of this inconstancy was locked upon with considerable reverence by the populace. He was not strictly a modernist, and was fully satisfied with the car barns of Birmingham and the horse and buggy days. One morning he met John Bodine down at the corner corner. "I'm going to Pontiac."

"There's a rumor going around about the car putting in electric cars between here and Pontiac," quoted the Judge.

"Yup," came back John Bodine, "you can't go in 'em when they put in 'em."

The case went to the judge's courage in the matter of convictions.