

The Birmingham Eccentric

SPECIAL
COMMUTER SERVICE
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FIFTY-FOURTH YEAR—NO. 16

BIRMINGHAM, OAKLAND COUNTY, MICHIGAN, SATURDAY, AUGUST 1, 1931

Village Government Takes Lead In Program Of Civic Development

Preparations For Rapid Growth Of Birmingham On Foundations Of Pioneer Settlement Carefully Planned By Municipal Officials

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS MARK PROGRESS

When John and Rufus Hunter turned their backs on Auburn, N. C. more than a century ago to seek a new home in the uncertain reaches of the Middle West, they did not dream of the implications for future generations that invisibly depended from the fate of their fortune's wheel.

When, in the bleak winter of 1819, they crossed the menacing waters of the Detroit River from Canada and turned north at Mt. Clemens on the famous old Saginaw Trail, already worn there by the mosses of fox and chipmunk, little did they realize that they were the vanguard of a great progress which was not to halt even with the evolution of Michigan's richest and most attractive residential community.

Changes in the complexion of the little settlement were numerous in the few years following its establishment with the crude log cabins of those rugged Hunter brothers. The hardships of existence naturally turned the pioneers to the rich soil which rewarded generously their determined efforts, and the embryo community, growing steadily with the addition of followers in the footsteps of the Hunters, took on the semblance of a purely agrarian settlement.

It was not many years, however, before the wheels of industry ground their way into the little community—now almost a village—and by a strange quirk of chance Birmingham, where today industries are unknown, was named in these early times for the resemblance it bore to England's Birmingham where factories flourished.

The resemblance was short-lived, however, and though the name survived, the factories vanished and the village began to bear the stamp of the strictly residential community which today is one of its most attractive features and which sets it off from most others of its size.

Through the history of Birmingham during the last two decades is less romantic than that of its pioneer days, it is at least as wholesome and as illustrative of the character and courage of the men who shaped its course.

Although churches and the beginnings of Birmingham's now widely celebrated school system came gradually during the middle and closing years of the 19th century, growth was not rapid until some time after the turn of the 20th.

Incorporated in 1864 and reincorporated in 1885, Birmingham boasted a population in 1900 of barely 2,500 inhabitants. By 1920 the figure had reached 50,000 and the period of rapid growth had begun.

Preparations for that growth had been carefully planned, and the population exceeding 12,000 and a steady increase expected as a result of the new commuter service, village government is so organized that even a doubling of the number of inhabitants would, it is said, necessitate only minor changes and additions in municipal machinery.

The commission-manager form of government was adopted in 1917 and went into effect the following year. At that time village offices occupied a building on the southeast corner of Woodward and Maple avenues, left to the community by one of its most beloved and public-spirited citizens, Matthew Chester, Martin and Merrill streets.

The site was later sold for \$125,000 and the money used for a part of the development of a beautiful civic center consisting of the three blocks bounded by Pierre, Chester, Martin and Merrill streets.

Two of the blocks—one affording space for Baldwin Public Library and the other for the \$240,000 Municipal Building—are already completed. The third, midway between the other two, is now awaiting development for park purposes for which it was planned.

An extensive program of street improvements was begun in 1913 with the paving of Woodward and Maple avenues. Southfield road was paved by the county in 1920, and Adams road followed in 1922. Streets in the vicinity of the Municipal Building were paved in 1928.

Today the village lays claim to 87 miles of streets, about 30 miles of which are paved to a width of at least 20 feet with either cement asphalt or tarvin. Practically all the remainder has been provided with some type of improvement, generally gravel.

Civic development in Birmingham took an important step forward in 1929 when a group of special committees was appointed to study and make recommendations in the department of finance, revision of ordinances, revision of the building code, sewers and sewage disposal, and water supply.

The sewer committee is still actively at work. The others have already turned in their reports, all of them recommending either changes or continuations of policies which, after the closest consideration, were found to be most beneficial to the progress and welfare of the village.

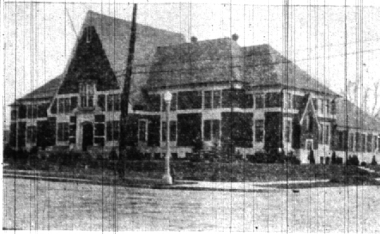
The Village Commission, members of which are elected by popular vote, is composed of seven men, including Harry Allen, president; Maurice Lowman, Lawrence

Village President



Harry A. Allen

MUNICIPAL BUILDING



Hubbert, Walter Connolly, Frank S. Packard, Dr. Fred L. Tucker, and Charles E. Lewis.

The village manager is James W. Parry, who was appointed to the post for an indefinite period in 1927. Other regular appointments for which the Commission is directly responsible are to the offices of treasurer, assessor, attorney and health officer.

"Water, police, fire, engineering, sewer and street departments are under the supervision of the manager. The village planning commission, a separate organization formed for the purpose of keeping abreast of new developments and fitting them into an attractive and adequate city plan, is filled by appointment from the Village Commission.

The Municipal Building was erected in 1928, and all village government was lodged under its one roof beginning Nov. 1 of that year. Additional office space in the building is rented to Bloomfield Township.

DO YOU KNOW?

"The future of the village is very good, and getting better all the time," said Mr. Charles E. Buck of Colgoove, Buck and Tilton in an interview two years ago, "but," he emphasized, "Birmingham will make a tremendous step when adequate commuter service is completed."

"The only thing that will encourage more buying in Birmingham is giving the public the kind of merchandise and service that people go to the city to buy," Mr. Buck said.

"I consider Birmingham's greatest need adequate commuter service."

Village Manager



James W. Parry

James W. Parry, manager of the Detroit office of the Travelers' Insurance Co. He is a graduate of Syracuse University, and was born in Seneca Falls, N. Y., coming to Birmingham in 1926.

Community House Fills Unique Place In Village

By HOPE F. HALGREN
Executive Director

Eleven years ago in December, the Community House idea was first formally presented to several small groups of Birmingham women. Rev. Charles Hardey McCurdy, then rector of St. James, sensed the need of such an institution and presented the concrete idea of a Community House where organizations might meet, recreation for the young people be offered, and a closer feeling of community enterprise established.

In January, 1921, a committee consisting of Mrs. G. W. Strelinger, chairman, Mrs. E. H. Mann, Mrs. C. J. Shain, Mrs. G. E. Ferguson, Mrs. L. G. Hupp and Mrs. George Raynolds met and recommended the undertaking of the project.

Ways and means were then, as now, an item of importance and the first big money-raising event was a highly colorful and financially successful Country Festival given in Bloomfield Hills on the estate of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Morley.

Industrious effort on the part of the women of the village culminated in the refinishing and formal opening of what we now call the "little old house" on the corner of Bates and Maple streets, on April 28, 1923. This building was leased from the St. James Church and the Community House Association was formed to further the aims and ambitions of the project.

With great enthusiasm dance-story-book hours for children, community song services and Birmingham's first open forum under the capable direction of Mrs. George T. Hendrie were introduced, many times taxing the capacity of the little house to accommodate those interested.

Miss Mary Martin and Miss Dorothy Dickenson will be remembered as the first resident hostesses. They were followed by Miss Esther Booth.

That summer Mrs. Maude Hilly Stroup had charge of Birmingham's first day nursery at the Community House, and it was during that time that she was

(Continued on next page)

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Charles E. Lewis



Walter Connolly



Dr. Fred L. Tucker



Frank S. Packard



Maurice Lowman

We Congratulate the Property Owners of the District Served by MICHIGAN'S FIRST COMMUTER SERVICE

Few people seem to realize the tremendous advantages which always accrue to a district favored by such service.

We are proud to have been the pioneer developers of Bloomfield Hills, and during our twenty-five years of real estate activity we have developed many properties, those actively selling at the present time being:

BLOOMFIELD VILLAGE:

A 600-acre residential community adjoining Birmingham on the West.

TROWBRIDGE FARMS:

A 200-acre suburban home development on Woodward Avenue North of Birmingham.

WOODWARDSIDE:

A 200-acre community development on Woodward Avenue between Royal Oak and Birmingham.

LAKE ANGELUS SHORES:

The finest restricted Lake development in Michigan on South Shore of Lake Angelus North of Pontiac.

CHELMSLEIGH:

A 300-acre country home development on the Lone Pine Road adjoining Bloomfield Hills Village on the West.

EASTOVER:

A 200-acre residential development on East Long Lake Road and Adams, adjoining Bloomfield Hills Village on the East.

WASHINGTON PARK:

A 200-acre residential development at Orchard Lake Avenue and Telegraph Road, City of Pontiac.

In all of the above developments, improvements are installed and homes are now under construction.

Judson Bradway Co. Realtors

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