

Our country must be prepared against invasion by any enemy country. But let's see that suitable defense does not include sending our own men to Europe's soil.

SIXTY-THIRD YEAR—NO. 8

The Birmingham Eccentric

PART TWO

BIRMINGHAM, OAKLAND COUNTY, MICHIGAN, THURSDAY, MAY 23, 1940

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"Tea for Two"

By Nellie Hurley Minie

ONE morning this week a soft spoken, distinguished looking woman sat in her large but simply furnished sitting room discussing 13 years of vexatious and untiring labor with a casual air that left me speechless.

She told of innumerable obstacles overcome during those 13 years, obstacles that would long ago have turned back any but a determined character. She spoke coolly of disappointments that would have crumpled another. And all this, mind you, without a figurative batter of her eyelash.

She is Mrs. Ralph Lane Polk who since 1927 has turned her gardens at "Highgate," the Polk's Lone Pine road estate, into one of the magnificent show places of this section of Michigan. A show place, she admits, that has cost her much, both in actual cash and in valuable years from her life.

Doesn't Like Cities

But for all that she wouldn't have changed, she says, her would, perhaps, not again attempt it on such an ambitious scale. But never be without a garden? Mrs. Polk can't visualize that.

She grew up in Upper Peninsula Calumet and abhors the crowded, elbow pushing cities. Only in the country is the air fit to breathe, she says, and only out of doors do you find the air in garden to be out of doors and still remain active she took up gardening. Result: Today "Highgate" is spoken of by landscape artists and garden enthusiasts throughout Michigan and Ohio as the most perfect examples of hillside gardening in this section of the country.

Laid out originally by D. Forest Pratt in 1927 when Pratt was serving as landscape gardener at Cranbrook, the garden today, although considerably simpler than a few years ago, is a masterpiece of riotous color during the summer months. Minutely planned so that the garden will be in bloom from spring until fall, there is no specialization but rather a constant succession.

Breath-taking view

A long window in the sitting room at the back of the Polk home affords a breathtaking view of the gardens that extend the entire width of the house. A dry wall, of stones and plants, slopes from the house down to the garden proper, which is built on two levels, and from these gardens stone steps lead to the gradual slope that sweeps down to the River Rouge.

Mrs. Polk no longer actively supervises the garden work, she said this week, but rather has placed the entire work in the hands of her supervisor. She is employed constantly during the summer and several extras are engaged monthly to take care of the extensive planting, she stated, which gives an idea of the amount of work entailed in keeping up a garden of this particular size and scope.

Standing at the top of this magnificent hillside it is difficult to imagine that it was begun 13 years ago as a "problem garden." A problem garden it was, too, as Mrs. Polk can well attest. It was a problem from the very beginning. In the first place, she will tell you patiently, the house faces one way and the slope graduates another. Nor was it an ordinary slope, either. In addition to graduating toward the river there is an 11 foot difference between the east and west end of the garden.

Polk's Folly

A problem indeed! Such a problem that landscape students at the University of Ohio have in past years been given dimensions of the Polk garden and told to work out their solutions. When the students completed their assignments they were bundled in automobiles and driven to Bloomfield Hills to see how Mr. Pratt dealt with this "problem" garden.

More than a problem, it was at

times nothing short of a headache. Mrs. Polk confessed this week. Several years ago when they began to expand it was decided to fill in the swampy marsh near the river. Total cost, before the job was completed, was considerable inasmuch as it involved the price of two dredges that had sunk into the mire. From that time forward that particular stretch of garden became known as "Polk's Folly."

The gardens at "Highgate," with a southern exposure and are hemmed in from the north by the house and from the west by large trees. This assures early blooms which are sometimes as much as a week earlier than neighboring gardens. But with all the southern exposure and the north and west side barriers, the gardens are several weeks behind schedule this year. Mrs. Polk informed me. An unusually cold spring has retarded growth.

Florida Garden, Too

Nor is it just Michigan gardens that have suffered from the cold spell. Mrs. Polk will tell you. Having only just returned from a winter spent at the Polk home in Naples, Fla., and still wearing a nut brown sun tan acquired from Florida's baking sun, she says it isn't yet possible to ascertain the damage that the cold Florida months inflicted on palm trees and blooms in her garden on the southern estate which faces the Gulf of Mexico.

The Florida garden is of necessity a flat one and has been kept extremely simple and uncomplicated. And although one usually imagines plant life there to be lush and abundant it actually requires more fertilizer than any other southern garden than the one in Bloomfield Hills. The hot baking sun and the much energy from the soil that in order to raise blooms great quantities of fertilizer are necessary.

Although "Highgate" is well known throughout Michigan and Ohio as a show place, the gardens are gradually being simplified and portions have already been put to grass. The simplification is becoming more and more necessary. Mrs. Polk says, because she is no longer able to actively supervise the work.

"My only advice to would-be gardeners," she said this week, "is not to elaborate a scene. The amount of time and energy necessary to maintain such a garden is tremendous and my only suggestion is that if you must garden, keep things just as simple as humanly possible."

So the garden that began 13 years ago as an object lesson to master landscape gardeners thrives today as one of Michigan's beauty spots. There isn't even a vestige of a problem now visible to the layman's eye. The sweeping that slopes broadly, gradually, tapering to a point; jutting into the Rouge River is a noble expanse whose perfect complement is the magnificent floral gardens above.

If this garden is a problem it's a problem we'd like to have.

UNNECESSARY WARNING
The dinner guest's nose was excitedly large, and father had noticed Willie staring at it. Expecting the boy to make some frank and outspoken comment, he gave him a disappointing comment, "That's all right, Dad," came the reassuring response. "I'm not going to say anything. I'm just looking at it."—*Minneapolis Journal*.

... Visits with Birmingham and Bloomfield Hills Women ...

Request for Street Oil Is Rejected

Continuing its policy of asking property owners to pay for street oiling, the City Commission, Monday night, denied the request of Harry J. Porter, 2020 Lincoln avenue, for oiling of Glenhurst street, north to Midvale. In his letter, Porter wrote that the dust is an "unbearable nuisance" and that it is not his "fault or responsibility" that his is the only house on the street at that sector. (In most streets oiled, the neighbors join in contributing the necessary money and hire a private concern to spread the oil.)

said that in his opinion, improvement of the street through the spreading of a special assessment would not be practical, because it would be doubtful whether the money ever could be collected from the owners of the vacant lots. "If we laid this oil for Mr. Porter, we would have to do the same thing all over town," concluded Commissioner Harry E. Bissett.

STREAMLINED ARITHMETIC
The teacher was conducting a class in mental arithmetic. She asked: "If your father had a thousand bushels of wheat and sold it for a dollar a bushel, what would he get?" "A new car," promptly answered one of the boys in the class.—*Kingman, Kan., Journal*.
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Spring had only just begun to work her magic in the lovely garden at "Highgate," home of the Ralph Lane Polks on Lone Pine road, when this photo was taken. To the left of this garden is a second garden, equally lovely, and of a higher level. From the center of the garden shown above a magnificent sweep of lawn rolls down to the River Rouge visible through the trees to the right. (Eccentric photo)

Park St. Sewer Will Be Built

Preparation of an assessment roll for the short Park avenue sewer was voted by the City Commission on Monday night after a hearing was held. A number of citizens appeared to ask questions, but objection was made to the sewer, 424 feet long, will extend from the Hunter boulevard intersection west on Oakland to Park, and thence south on Park a short distance. Estimated cost is \$1,240, although there may be a saving through use of WPA labor. Cost for an average-size lot has been estimated at \$25, payable over five years. The work is expected to start within a few weeks. The new line will relieve the flow north of Oakland to Euclid, where complaints have been received over basement flooding.

GOES BY STOP STREET CRASH IS THE RESULT

Failure to halt at a stop street at Pierce and Merrill streets resulted in a crash Sunday evening in a 1934 Buick sedan driven by Bates E. Miller, 1288 Humphrey, Birmingham, and Clarence B. Carter, 19 Hazel Park. Carter admitted falling to stop. Damage of \$300 was done to the front of Miller's car.

Discover Heronry High in Trees

ONAWAY—A heronry high in the tops of several large bald-of-Gilead trees in the southeastern part of the Proque Isle state forest has been discovered by Merl V. Prichard, forest superintendent.

Prichard spotted the nesting place after watching several large blue herons flying about just over the tops of the trees. There are eight nests in the heronry, each made up of sticks about the size of a lead pencil, and looking like a pile of brush. Three pairs of herons were observed in the vicinity, and some of the birds appeared to be setting, he reports.

Means to Organize Taxpayers Here

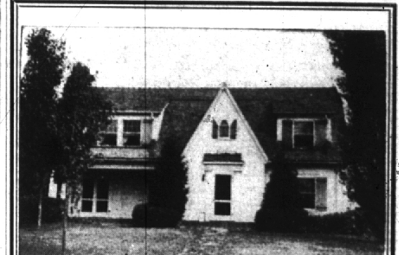
Taxpayers' associations are forming all over the state, and a number have already been organized in Oakland County at Clawson, Pontiac, Hazel Park, Berkley and Pontiac. James F. Valley, of 774 West Clawson road, Clawson, Mich., has announced that any one in Birmingham wishing to aid the formation of such a group in Birmingham should communicate with him.

MY MISTAKE
An Atchison policeman recently saw a man choking a woman to death. The policeman did not interfere. He thought the couple was practicing a modern dance.—*Atchison Globe*.

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