

# A Century Of Government

By LARRY EVOE  
Staff Writer

Birmingham has the oldest governmental body in this section of Oakland County.

The county board of supervisors established Birmingham as a corporate village on January 8, 1864.

In fact, early records indicated at that time it was the "only village large or small" in Bloomfield Township.

Although it wasn't incorporated until 1864, the town was first platted on August 25, 1836.

scribed as being a village of "solid wealth and conservatism" as well as being a healthy and "most agreeable place to live."

Residents in the newly formed village wasted little time in setting up their own governing body.

The first local election was held at the home of James Grinley on

Tuesday, March 1, 1864.

J. C. K. Crooks was elected president of the board of seven trustees. The other village fathers included George L. Lee, Robert J. Mitchell, S. N. Hill, Hugh Irving, John Bodine and C. W. Jenks. Hill was named to the post of clerk.

In May of 1864 Alanson Partidge became Birmingham's first town marshal and Bodine the first treasurer.

Shores became Birmingham's first paid "business manager" at a yearly salary of \$2,000. The contract provided a clause for "the privilege of discharging if not satisfactory."

Abbott's contract was approved by the village commission on April 3, 1918.

The first planning commission was appointed and organized on Feb. 3, 1926.

Still another charter change was made in 1927 raising the number of commissioners to six again, retained the village manager and provided for a village president.

With the incorporation of Birmingham as a city in 1933, the village president became the city mayor and the village manager the city manager.

Birmingham's first official recreation program got under way in April of 1936, but it was not until the following spring that a recreation board was named.

Ray Palmer was appointed chairman of the recreation committee and the city, schools and Community House contributed \$300 each and the program was launched.

In 1937 zoning board of appeals was established and in 1940 the electrical examination board was formed.

The Hospital Authority Board was set up in 1945 in all of southern Oakland County and Birmingham became a member. The authority has control of William Beaumont Hospital.

The first parking study committee was appointed in 1948 and it was joined in 1951 by the newest official city board the building board of appeals.



THE 1928 VILLAGE commission was composed of seven members. Seated from left are Commissioner W. W. Henry, Lee A. White, President H. T. Ellerby, Commis-

sioner Hope F. Halgren and Scott Hersey. Standing are H. J. McBride (left) and Laurence Hulbert.

The trustees borrowed \$600 in the spring of 1864 for "village improvement" and the newly-formed government was officially in business.

In 1885 a new charter was granted which provided for six commissioners. On March 8, 1866 Frank Hagerman was elected the new president of the village.

For many years village business was carried out in homes and stores. By the early 1900's offices were opened along with the library at the corner of Maple and Woodward.

In October of 1917 village residents approved the adoption of a new charter calling for a manager type of government.

The charter went into effect on Feb. 15, 1918 and the new officers of the village took office on March 3. The commission was set at three members.

G. A. Abbott of Grosse Pointe

## Court Action Failed to Stop New City Hall

The home of our city government almost did not become a home at one time.

Between July and December of 1927, when the rapidly-expanding village of Birmingham was attempting to find a home for its increasing municipal activities, a difference of opinion existed as to the completion of the proposed new municipal building.

A portion of the village commission was in favor of the completion of the new civic project because the people had voted for the new building.

THE OTHER faction of the commission, although not believing the new edifice necessary at the time, objected to the proposal that the police and fire departments be housed in the new building.

The strife continued for several months during which a trio of local citizens sought to stop the entire proceedings in the Pontiac Circuit Court.

The latter faction lost out in its fight when it failed to carry its case to court. Finally the village received a decree favorable to the completion of the project.

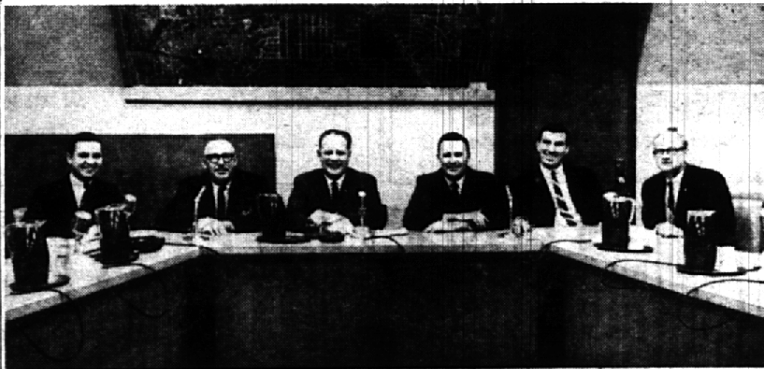
MUNICIPAL offices were formerly housed in the old Baldwin Public Library, on the southeast corner of Woodward and Maple.

The first Civic Center plan, initiated in 1928, during the regime of Village President Charles J. Shain, conceived a separate municipal building so that the best interests of the community would be served if the future library and the village offices were separated into their own buildings.

## Wrong Prescription Prompts Heroic Measures

On a day's visit to the big city, a Birmingham man bought some medicine from a druggist who sold him the wrong prescription. When the Birmingham man got home, he took a dose of his "medicine," which turned out to be alum.

Commented The Eccentric (1873): They've been trying to pull the pucker out of him with a stump puller for the past week."



THE 1964 CITY commission is also composed of seven members. From left are Commissioner William E. Roberts, Carl F. Ingraham, Mayor William H. Burgum, May-

or Pro Tem Robert W. Page, Commissioners David F. Breck and Ralph A. Main. Commissioner Charles W. Renfrew was out of town and unavailable for the picture.

## FARMERS, STOREKEEPERS FIRST TO SERVE

# The Men Who Led Birmingham

By DAVE PHILPO  
Staff Writer

Butcher, baker, candlestick maker . . .

Although none of these was ever a village president or mayor of Birmingham, many other occupations have been represented in these offices since the community came into being over 100 years ago.

There have been farmers, storekeepers, bankers, insurance men, undertakers, engineers, druggists, attorneys, businessmen, a tailor, a newspaperman, a hotel owner, a dentist, a school teacher, a realtor and lumber dealer.

Since April 3, 1933, when the village received its city charter, most of the mayors have come from the ranks of attorneys.

THE FIRST village election was held at the home of James Grinley on Tuesday, March 1, 1864. Elected to the board of trustees were J. C. K. Crooks, George L. Lee, Robert J. Mitchell, S. N. Hill, Hugh Irving, John Bodine and C. W. Jenks.

Crooks was elected president of the board and Hill was chosen village clerk.

On April 16, 1885, a bill passed the state legislature to reincorpo-

rate the village and the first election under the new charter was held March 8, 1886.

Ira Slade, who ran a produce market, was re-elected as president of the board. He served as village president since from 1883 to 1887.

FRANK HAGERMAN, a druggist, was elected village president three years in a row, 1877-79, and 19 years later, in 1898, served two more years in that capacity.

The man who served longest as village president was George E. Daines, a hotel owner, first elected in 1908. He served for five consecutive years, until 1914.

Daines, one of the leading furnishing undertakers and furniture dealers of Oakland County, was born on Oct. 30, 1850, in Bloomfield Township.

For a while he was a partner with his brother-in-law, Frank Hagerman, in a drug business in Birmingham. At the death of his father, he assumed proprietorship of a hotel.

FINDING THE occupation of "mime host" a congenial one and one for which he was well adapted, Daines subsequently purchased the National Hotel which he operated successfully for 27 years.

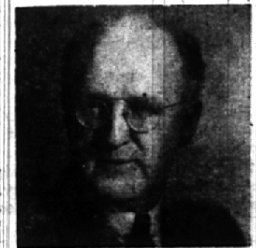
Daines was connected with the

village board for a total of 27 years.

Almeron Whitehead, a cofounder of The Birmingham Eccentric, was village president from 1895 to 1898.

HE AND HIS newspaper partner, George H. Mitchell, also founded a private bank in Birmingham in 1887. Under the name of the Exchange Bank, the institution flourished and developed into one of the leading banks of its kind in Oakland County.

On Nov. 9, 1910, the bank was merged with the First National Bank of Birmingham, of which Whitehead was named first president.



CHARLES J. SHAIN

Charles J. Shain, another druggist, was village president from 1924 to 1927. Shain, who also was a grocerman, was intimately associated with the mercantile interests of Birmingham.

He was born in Bloomfield Township in 1882, was graduated from high school in Birmingham, after which he was employed for 3 1/2 years in the drug and grocery store which he later owned and operated. The store still exists and is located at Maple and Pierce.

SHAIN, who studied at Ferris Institute, was also a director of the First National Bank of Birmingham.

John E. Martz was mayor of Birmingham for eight consecutive years, from 1936 to 1944, longer than any other person.

During his 12 years on the commission, Martz participated in the introduction of many city facilities and services.

Among them were voting machines, a modern zoning ordinance, model traffic ordinance, sewage treatment plant, construction of a city garage and warehouse, two-way police radio, retirement system, two new deep wells, Hunter Blvd. by-pass, establishment of the city plan commission and development of a recreation commission.