

Bagley Family First In Hills

By SALLY RUHF
Special Writer

"The people, living now in the Hills north of Detroit, feel a real need for a comprehensive plan for redefining and zoning.

"To adopt a plan, practical and definite, is deemed imperative in view of the rapid development and sale of property."

This item appeared in a Bloomfield Hills monthly magazine, "The Afterglow," published many years ago. The date was April 1925.

Today, 1964 the sentiment is the same. In the April 9 issue of the Birmingham Eccentric, Anne C. Mansfield writes in the "People's Column Letters," as she refers to the recent elections when 2 or 3 story apartments were an undecided, zoning-ordinance issue, "Who Could Find Joy Living in a Peanut Cluster?"

THE CITIZENS of Bloomfield Hills, 2,600 strong, are proud of a long history of struggle to maintain this image.

It all began in 1816 when Congress sent surveyors into the Northwest territory who reported back that "no lands in Michigan were fit for cultivation."

Pontiac, chief of the Ottawas and all the Indians of the territory knew differently.

They knew from the experience of many bloody struggles the land northwest of Detroit, 834 feet above sea level, was free from fever contracted in the swamps and lowlands of the Detroit area, snakes and mud.

In spite of the pessimistic judgments of the Congressional surveyors in 1819 Judge Amasa Bagley from Massachusetts, his son-in-law William Morris and the Deacon Elijah Fish families came by schooner from Buffalo overland thru what is now Mount Clemens by oxcart and horse teams carrying their household goods.

Through impenetrable forest paths, past high trees they forded streams and finally settled in a

government-allotted section 23 of N.E. corner for which they paid two dollars per acre for about 80 acres apiece.

IN 1821 BAGLEY opened a log tavern on the northwest corner of the Saginaw Trail which extended from Pontiac to Detroit and is now Woodward.

This crossroads, where the city of Bloomfield Hills now stands, was known for many years to the early settlers as "Bagley's."

In 1832 the tavern was bought and rebuilt of frame by William Morris. It was then used for public and social gatherings as well as "merry-making". In 1832 whiskey was 50 cents a gallon.

He also built and operated the first grist mill; the area's greatest convenience. In 1828, opposite the tavern a brick and pottery-making works later was erected. On this site a few years earlier the first Methodist camp meeting in Michigan was said to have been held.

THESE POTTERY-making works were later bought by John Daines for the manufacture of drain tile.

Thomas McGraw was a representative to the state legislature and was ambitious enough to want the state capital at Bloomfield Center (the present Long Lake and Woodward area).

The Deacon Elijah Fish home in the same area was sold to the Benedicts. Today a weathered sign proclaims at the site of the boarded-up, abandoned probably the oldest house in the area the Clara Benedict farm.

In 1850 the first frame and then later brick school house was erected where Swanson Architectural Co. now conducts its business.

At the turn of the century Charles Stinchfield and Milton Conklin and then later George Gough Booth and his wife Ellen Scripps Booth, the Barbour and Shaw families realized the residen-

tial potential of the Hills area and moved in and built estates.

THE SAGINAW Trail served the Indians and white settlers starting out as a swamp and covered with heavy timber. In 1822 Governor Lewis Cass established a road from Detroit via Pontiac to Saginaw. In 1824 by a legislative act a turnpike project was begun.

According to Will Caswell, a retired school teacher and descendant of the early Adams Road settlers, "the road on the left side going south from Pontiac was necessarily stronger and was made of planks because the wagon loads were heavier traveling to Detroit with farm produce, apples, potatoes, fruit, perhaps a barrel or two of whiskey.

On the way back the loads were empty except for money. The road going north was made of gravel. The teams stuck close together especially in the 12 Mile area be-

cause of robbers."

Now that trade was established, the Saginaw Trail, a gravel well-drained road, the children in school and the churches established down by "Piety Hill", as Birmingham was called in the early days, the people decided to unite. The 1,100 inhabitants of the Hills in 1927 incorporated as a village.

In 1932 the people of the village applied for a city charter which was granted and signed by Governor Wilbur Brucker.

THE PRESENT English style architecturally designed City Hall with its many colored slated roof and brick walls looks like a rectangular barn.

Today the city government is housed on the second floor and is composed of four people; the city manager, Elmer Kephart who also is the assessor. The city clerk is Robert Stadler who is also the treasurer and director of public safety. Two secretaries complete the paid city government.

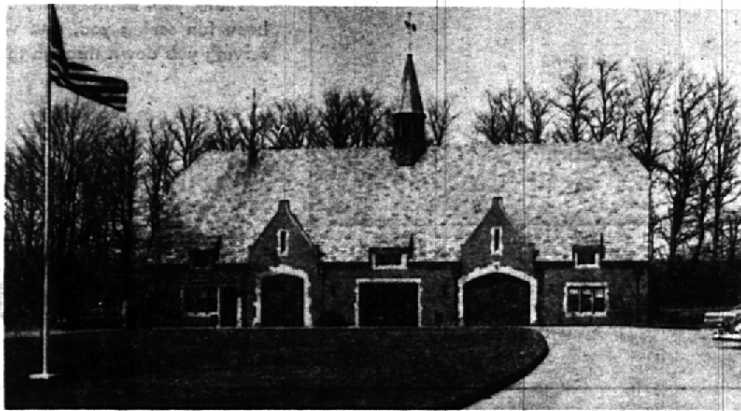
A **PLANNING** Commission was created in 1944 and is composed of nine members, six of whom are of diverse occupations, the other three, the city manager, one commissioner and the mayor.

The city government is proud of its snow removal efficiency, its sanitary sewer system and its Mayor Exchange Day.

Bloomfield Hills expects to grow and by 1970 to hold 4,000 people.

In a recent issue of Holiday an article about Grosse Pointe contains some flattering allusions to the Hills.

Stephen Birmingham in comparing the two "rich small cities" says, as he quotes a Grosse Pointe matron, "If a New Yorker or a Californian, or a New Englander were moving to Detroit and looking for a beautiful suburb to live in he would choose Bloomfield Hills in a minute."



BLOOMFIELD HILLS CITY HALL ON E. LONG LAKE
Built in 1926, the structure was once used by highway department.

HILLS' DISTRICT FLOURISHES

Good Planning Marks School Growth

BY SAVILLA SLOAN
Special Writer

Back in the deep depression days of 1932 a tiny little school district called Bloomfield Hills had the courage to build a lovely new school building on Vaughan Road. It housed all children in the school district, serving both as an elementary and secondary school.

Eight students comprised its first graduating class in 1936.

From this audacious beginning has grown Bloomfield Hills School District #2 which this year will graduate 325 students from capacity-filled Bloomfield Hills High School. The building was completed in 1955 and enlarged again in 1962. Total school district enrollment is over 5,000.

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT is remarkable not only for its growth, but the foresightedness of its officials who, by planning ahead, have kept physical facilities abreast of its student population.

Scholastically, it has grown at the same rate with 80 per cent or more of its present graduates going on to college and gaining acceptance at major universities.

Dotted over the area which now comprises Bloomfield Hills School District #2 were a number of tiny autonomous school districts. Each one had a small elementary school house but none, until Vaughan School was built, had grades past eight. When students were ready for high school they had to be transported many miles to the nearest available high school which would take them on a tuition basis.

The area was still predominantly agricultural, sparsely settled and

there were perhaps 30 to 40 students residing in each small school district.

IN 1946, four of these small school districts voted to amalgamate with the progressive Bloomfield Hills School District #1. They were Linton, Tuscarora, Wing Lake and a part of Bloomfield Village school districts.

Thus was formed Bloomfield Hills School District #2. It had 203 students.

In 1948, Pine Laké School District amalgamated. In 1957 Hickory Grove school became a part. The school board has turned down any requests for annexation since then.

None of the tiny schools which housed the original school districts' children are now used except Wing Lake's.

This one-room field-stone school

erected in 1857 has been added to three times—in 1948, '51 and '54. The original section now serves as a school library and great care was taken to preserve the original architectural flavor.

Actually, the 1857 Wing Lake School building was not the first school at this location. Early histories of Bloomfield Township note that in 1824, only five years after the first settlers came to this area, a school house was erected on the grounds of Jacob Sly's farm, which was located on the south shores of Wing Lake.

ONE OF THE most crucial periods in the development of the newly-formed school district occurred in the early fifties. By that time, Vaughan School was bursting at its seams serving both as

an elementary school and the district's secondary school.

Twice the district voters turned down a proposal to erect a high school.

It was presented again in November, 1953. This time a number of school district patrons waged a house to house canvass for support of the bond issue and it passed by a two-to-one margin. Active in the campaign were Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Martz. Mrs. Martz was subsequently elected in 1958 to the school board and is now serving her second term.

Two other present members of the school board, David Lee and Merrill O. Bates, also were elected to the board as a result of the fight to gain a separate high school. They were elected in 1954 to represent the progressive citizens

who saw the need of an extensive building program ahead to meet expected population growth.

The year after completion of the high school in 1955, Eastover Elementary School was erected. When Hickory Grove joined the school district it added its elementary school which also was built in 1956.

In 1958 Bloomfield Hills Junior High School was built, as was Pine Lake Elementary School. In 1960, Conant Elementary School was completed. In 1962, East Hills Junior High School and George G. Booth Elementary School were built.

By this time, additions had also been made at all the other schools to keep pace with student enrollment.

Three superintendents of schools have served since formation of the district. Carroll Munshaw served from 1942 to 1948. He was succeeded by John Jacobs who resigned in 1953.

Since then Eugene L. Johnson has guided the district.

Under Johnson, the student population has grown more than six-fold, increasing from 794 in 1953 to over 5,000.

Irving Menucci has served one year longer than Johnson. He is assistant superintendent in charge of finances. Kay Flint, who is assistant superintendent in charge of curriculum, has been with the district even longer than Johnson and Menucci, having come in 1948.

In June of 1960, the five-man school board was increased by two.

Its present members, besides Bates, Lee and Mrs. Martz, are treasurer Max Miller, who has been a board member since 1958, president Dr. Charles Bowers, Earl Givens and Richard McGraw.



BLOOMFIELD HILLS VAUGHAN SCHOOL
In 1932 building was only school in Bloomfield.