

'Dream City' Comes To Life

By CLEO SYMONS
Special Writer

Louise Lathrup's Vision

Mrs. Louise Lathrup Kelley, founder of Oakland County's "farm village," was born on a farm near Detroit, May 27, 1893.

Mrs. Kelley was the granddaughter of a pioneer family who settled on what is now Cortland just west of Twelfth St.

Before the turn of the century, her grandmother, Mrs. Miami Lathrup, and her mother, Mrs. Annie Lathrup, owned several farms in an area bounded by Dexter, Glendale, Twelfth and Collingwood.

Sitting on the porch of her Greenfield Township home, Miss Lathrup watched builders erecting houses in a newly-platted area of a fast-growing residential section.

She became interested in real estate and the kind of homes being built and began storing up ideas.

After attending business college, she worked for a year as a clerk in the Ford Motor Co.'s Highland Park plant.

HER INTEREST in land development and the construction of homes increased over the years. She began to have ambitions to create something of permanency and beauty.

She deplored the false-front, movie-set appearance of houses under construction around her. It was a waste of land, she believed, to use beautiful brick facings on houses with shoddy sides and backs.

Within a short time her ambitions began to be realized.

In 1918 she took over the management of a family plot and developed what are now Lawrence and Collingwood avenues between Dexter and Linwood.

Miss Lathrup insisted on prior approval of all building plans, and the new subdivision thus was re-

stricted to all-brick houses of high quality.

DEVELOPMENT came slowly but to her satisfaction, and the new area emerged according to her specifications. It eventually became a valued part of Detroit.

The lady with a vision had tackled a man-sized job and mastered it.

Her success inspired her to undertake an even more challenging project.

Selling her family's properties in Detroit, she acquired outlying farmland. It included 1,000 acres in Southfield Township, between 10½ and 12 Mile roads.

Miss Lathrup planned to follow the same pattern that had brought her first success and build a small city of high quality homes.

Then began one of the largest land promotion schemes in the Detroit area.

IN 1923, she founded Lathrup Village, first known as "The Townsite" or the "Bungalow Village."

Again the controlled building plan was followed, and another beautiful development began to emerge in strict accordance with her ideas.

Lathrup Village is reportedly the only city in the United States having homes built of all brick, stone or masonry, each with attached garage.

Families were carefully selected for this self-ruled, completely independent community.

In 1929, Miss Lathrup married

Charles D. Kelley, real estate editor of The Detroit News.

Mr. Kelley became an active partner in the business, but his wife continued to mastermind it.

Because "Louise Lathrup" was already a household word in real estate circles, Mrs. Kelley was persuaded by her husband to retain her maiden name.

AT A COST of \$4 million, the

Lathrup-Kelley team provided a complete utility plant without cost to their lot owners.

During the depression years the development was hard hit.

Through all the court actions, increased land taxes imposed by the state and critical economic conditions, Louise Lathrup skillfully managed to retain all of the land.

The building program begun in 1927 slowed down from time to

time. It got under way again in 1937 but real progress came only after the close of World War II.

In December 1953, 30 years after its founding Lathrup Village residents voted to incorporate as a city. At that time the sewer and water mains were deeded to the city free.

Today more than 1,500 residences line the winding, tree-shaded streets. Each is valued at more than \$20,000. Property sells now at more than \$50 a front foot.

The city's population today is nearing the 4,000 mark.

FOR MANY years the Kelleys made their home in the imposing "House in the Woods" built for them in a choice section of the village.

A daughter Louise, was born to the couple. She became Mrs. Carl Driscoll and lives in Lathrup, also. Death ended the career of Louise Kelley at the age of 69 on Jan. 25, 1953.

She was entombed in Woodlawn Cemetery within a few miles of her birthplace and the scene of her life's work.

Louise Lathrup has been characterized as "a genius," a conscientious craftsman and a "lady with a vision."

But she was no visionary.

A practical businesswoman, she lived to see her dream of a beautiful city of well-built homes become a reality. Thus, she honored her heritage and established a tradition.

But it was accomplished only through hard work and perseverance.

"Lathrup Village," with its distinctive buildings and high standards is a living monument to her pioneering spirit.



LOUISE LATHRUP KELLEY

Club Marks 25th Year

The Lathrup Woman's Club celebrated its 25th birthday in February of this year. Its membership has grown to 312 members and its activities have multiplied in the Lathrup area.

Mrs. Earl Doig had no idea that the club would reach such size when she invited a few friends for tea in February, 1939. They discussed the needs of the Lathrup School in Southfield Township.

They agreed to hold a meeting of mothers of school children Feb. 15 at the school. Thirty-five women attended this meeting and formed the Lathrup Townsite Woman's Club, with the purpose of purchasing necessary school equipment.



THE GROUP—1940

Within a few months, the membership had reached 86. Mrs. Doig, a world traveler and lecturer, was the first president and is still active in the organization. Under her vigorous leadership, the club contributed many things to the schools. The first donation was a set of encyclopedias. During the first four years of the organization's history, over \$1,150 was raised for school equipment.

IN JUNE, 1939, the members decided to make more new books available to each other, so a Reading Department was formed. It was agreed to buy and exchange books.

The following year, a Junior Activities Department was organized. At that time, it sponsored dances each month for high school children.

The Ruth Alden Dress Fund was given 118 dresses in 1940, as the club began to expand its activities beyond the school. Since 1941, it has sponsored a Girl Scout troop.

During World War II, members did Red Cross sewing, attended civilian defense classes, promoted bond drives, collected fat and tin cans. One thousand two hundred dollars was contributed to buy artificial limbs for war victims.

In 1942, the scope of the club was enlarged to include all townsite activities, and development of a recreational program to serve changing community needs was begun. Membership had grown to 150. Over \$4,000 was contributed to war relief programs.

One object of the Lathrup Woman's Club is "development of a community spirit." Membership in the club is open to all women residents of Lathrup.

AFTER THE war, when many new families began moving into the community, the club provided a way of getting acquainted with

neighbors. Members began a fund for the purchase of a permanent community house.

This fund is growing and is available to the city to aid in the purchase of a site for a community building for Lathrup activities. Mrs. Norman H. Iverson is the club's representative on the board of Lathrup Village Municipal Building Authority, which is seeking a site.

In 1948, the growing organization became a member of the Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs and changed its name to the Lathrup Woman's Club.

New activities were a College Career Group for teen-agers, a Halloween party for elementary children and an adult garden group.

In 1951 the Chorolettes was formed. The Youth Council was established in 1956 to provide recreational activities, such as the golf league for high school people.

FOR SEVERAL years, the club met at the "House in the Woods," home of Mrs. Louise Lathrup Kelley, a member. It now meets the first Monday of every month, October through April, in the Fellowship Hall of the Community Congregational Church.

A wide range of charities are supported with profits from an annual Christmas dance. The total of 1962 and 1963 donations was \$1,666. Mrs. Cassius M. Lea is now president. Besides the monthly programs, which feature speakers from throughout the world, the club holds many workshops.

Past presidents still living in Lathrup are Mesdames Doig, Iverson, Arthur Mitchell, Everett Nelson, Conrad Bloom, William Reinhard, Elmer Craig, Frederick Byington and Alex Billesdon.

A silver anniversary tea marked the club's 25 years of service to Lathrup.

ASK LATHRUP

When Is a Village Not a Village?

BY DOTTY BREIDENBACH
Special Writer

Just south of Birmingham in Southfield township is a community—the city of Lathrup Village. Natives to this area find nothing startling in the name but a second look may bring a shake of the head and questioning.

How can a city be a village or a village be a city?

The solution is not so puzzling if you can wade through Webster's New International Dictionary, unabridged; prowl through dusty corners and diligently search old files, or call the powers that be and get a variety of definitions.

First, we find that in the United States a village is described by Webster as being less in number than a town or city and more than in a hamlet.

In the United States, Webster says, such is incorporated as a municipality and governed by locally elected officials. Both descriptions fit our neighbor.

A CITY, WEBSTER SAYS, is any large important or noted town or inhabited place. That could or could not fit, depending on your points of view. In the United States such a place, Webster explains, is a municipal corporation occupying a definite area and subject to the state from which it derives its powers and for which it exists as an area of local government.

Again, that fits.

Now, as to the files, we find that the City of Lathrup Village began as Lathrup townsite and was de-

veloped as a real estate promotion around 1923 and designated for this purpose.

The land consisted of about 1,900 acres between 10½ and 12 Mile roads and was originally a series of farms.

The residents felt they had some very nice homes but were paying high taxes to the township and, in order to preserve what they had for themselves, decided in 1953 to become independent and incorporate as a city.

A city, according to township clerk Fanny Adams, differs from a village in that it has full powers to conduct state and national elections and to collect county and school taxes. A village is restricted to only local services.

NOW THE CITY fathers found themselves faced with the prospect of a name. It could be called Lathrup Hills, but it was not hilly. It was not farm land anymore so it could not be designated as Lathrup Farms and Lathrup City was just too citted for the inhabitants.

Legally every city has the title, City of, and so it is called in legal terms, though dropped when written for the purpose of mailing. Lathrup legally would then become the City of Lathrup. There was another locality, Lathrup, spelled differently, located in the middle of the state.

Since the citizens wanted to keep Lathrup a village type place, and to avoid mailing confusion with Lathrup, Mich., the name was incorporated as City of Lathrup Village.

It isn't so puzzling after all.