B'ham The City That Grew

Civic Center Result Of Population Rise

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No matter where a town, city or village — U.S.A. in the atomium glitter and vast array of paraphernalia characterizing our modern-day drug store displays now morally commonplaces as crowded aisles can accommodate with ease.

Strangely enough, although long ago there wasn't a Cincinnati on the southeast corner of Wood-

and Maple, where the kind of traffic problem existed, for it was on this corner that the old Baldwin Public Library building stood, also housing Birmingham's police department, fire department and village offices.

To describe the small quarters, busy and cramped, was putting it mildly. But for many years, long before a group of civic-minded residen
cent decided that their growing village needed a larger home for its municipal offices, this was the situation.

THE TOWN was growing by leaps and bounds, literally (the old library building, anyway) burning at the seams. At the dedication ceremonies in 1928 of the present municipal building report prepared by the late Charles J. Shaw, former president of the village, and George H. Averill, publisher of The Eclectic, told of the tremendous growth of Bir-

"Hundreds of new homes have been erected here since 1928; the village has increased in area dur

ing the time from its original square mile of 460 acres to over 2,500 acres.

Population has more than doubled until today it is estimated that approximately 10,000 people live within our corporate boundary. Such progress only serves to make us the proudest community of the institutions of Birmingham, including its municipal government."

BECAUSE OF THESE consid

erations, a civic sentiment gained momentum. The present municipal building was first con

sidered as part of a Civic Center Plan during the reign of Village President Shaw and Commission

ers Charles A. Brigham and Oliver W. Bell.

It was finally decided that the best interests of the village would be served if the future li-

cency and village offices were separ

ated into their own buildings. More incentive for the building movement was supplied when the widening of Woodward Ave. was proposed, thereby necessitating the tearing down of the old Baldwin Public Library building.

Through court action, the library property was acquired by the village commission and the library board was granted control over the first block of the Civic Center originally purchased for both pur

oses.

On this first site of the center was built the present Baldwin Public Library.

WHEN THE WIDENING of Woodward became more than a proposal, and the commission dis

covered that there was too high a value on the property acquired through the court action, a search began to find a suitable piece of property to house the village offices.

With the hope that the village might actually have a Civic Center with all the different functions housed together, attention was turned to a section of land on the block east of the property where the library was under construction.

For a bond issue approved by the voters and $125,000 acquired from the sale of the old library property the building commission started its plans to build the beautiful building that houses our city government today.

Ground was broken in January, 1928, with the cornerstone laid April 22. The building was ready for occupancy in October 1928.

"The commission desired that the police and police departments be housed in the building in such a manner that if the future develop

ment of the village required their quarters for offices, they could be moved to a new location without excessive expense. This was done, and the building included the Fire Dept. at one end, Birmingham's Police Station at the other, plus offices for the city man

ager, engineer, treasurer, attorney, municipal judge, clerk, building inspector and water department.

The Fire Station has been moved to two other modern buildings on Chestfield and Adams.

Also included in the building is a spacious room where the city commission meets every Monday night. The building accommodates approximately 100 city employ

es, which includes department heads plus police and fire depart

ment personnel.

SPRINGDALE CLUBHOUSE BURNS

1944 Fire Destroyed Popular Activity Center

Role of the Horse Rated Star Billing In Old Good Days

Horses played an important part in the early days of Birmingham. They were the best means of transpor
tation for people in and around the village and, though they are not as necessary today, the loss of a good horse was a severe blow to Birmingham's early settlers.

The following appeared in the first edition of The Eclectic, May 2, 1879:

"Henry Martin, of Troy, lost a valuable horse, Tuesday last. On his way home from a birthday party at M. M. Tomes', he noticed the horse appearing strait driving past the same road. He stopped, standing horse, his horse staggered, and im

mediately after being unhitched, dropped dead in front of J. Bal

dwin's blacksmith shop—very con

venient for Jack to remove the shod.

Tents Served As Places Of Worship

Churches have always been a vital part of the Birmingham community. In the 1860's, several ministers preached their sermons in open tents as crowds of people gathered.

One of the first churches in the area was the Presbyterian Church. An article in the Jan. 4, 1863, Eclectic described the Christmas atmosphere in the latter Presbyterian Church.

"The Christmas entertainment at the Presbyterian Church on Fri

sday evening last was a decided success. The church was tastefully decorated with evergreens, and the Christmas tree was lighted with presents.

"MR. FEED W. Wladiched, being introduced, immediately began his "chalk talk," commencing an address on soul and eternity, illustrating his remarks by the aid of his blackboard. The service was full of anec
dotes and wit.

"After the service, the tree was now lit up, the closing hymn sung, the benediction pronounced, and then the delighted children went home to participate in the joys and sorrows which will come to them ere another year brings again the anniversary of that glad day on which God gave to the world his greatest gift."