Bagley Family First In Hills

By Sally Ruffy Senior Writer

"The people, living now in the Hills north of Detroit, feel a real need for a comprehensive plan for restricting and zoning. The present plan is ad hoc, Arbitrary and definite, is deemed imperative in view of rapid development and the saving of property."

Quoted in a Bloomfield Hills monthly magazine, "The Afterglow," published many years ago in 1925.

Today, the sentiment is the same in Bloomfield Hills as in Birmingham, Eccentric, Anne C. Monson, senior editor "People's Column Letters," as she refers to the town. "Nearly 99 per cent of the 2 or 3istory apartments were an underclass." "Who Could Find Joy Living in a Peanut Cluster?"

THE CITIZENS of Bloomfield Hills, 2,500 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 Ottawa and all the Indians of the territory knew differently.

Pontiac knew from the experience of many bloody struggles the land north of Detroit was 311 feet above sea level, was free from ferocious, swampy, mosquito infested woodlands and lowlands of the Detroit area, snakes and all.

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

They tracked along forest paths, past high trees they fished streams and finally settled in a

government-allotted section 25 of N.E. corner for which they paid two dollars per acre for about 80 acres apiece.

In 1821 BAGLEY opened a store 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 brick 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 1826, opposite the tavern a brick and potash-making works later was erected. On this site a few years earlier the Methodist camp meeting in Michigan was said to have been held.

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

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

The Deacon Elisha Fish home in the same area was sold to the Benedict. Today a weathered sign proclaims at the corner 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 Swanec Archetitectural Co. now conducts its business.

In the early part of the century Charles Stinchfield, his son William and the Deacon Elisha Fish families came by schooner from Fort Gratiot, overland third what is now Mount Clemens by horse and horse teams carrying their household goods.

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HILLS DISTRICT FLOURISHES

Good Planning Marks School Growth

BY SAVILLA SLOAN Special Writer

Back in the deep depression days of 1929 a tiny Hills school district called Bloomfield Hills School District 2 was formed.

It housed all children in the school district of that time in the elementary and secondary school.

By 1958, four of these small school districts voted to amalgamate with the progressive Bloomfield Hills School District 2. They were Livonia, Tarrytown, West Lake and a part of Bloomfield Village school district.

This was formed Bloomfield Hills School District 2. It had 158 students.

In 1958, Five Lake School District amalgamated. In 1957, First 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 district's children are now used except Wing Lake.

In 1957, Children's Union School, now Clay Center School, was opened. By that time, Vaughan School was burning 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, 1962. This time a number of school district patrons waged house to house canvass for support of the bond issue and it passed by a two-to-one margin. Arrive in the campaign were Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Marsh. Mr. Marsh was subsequently elected in 1958 to the State board and is now serving her second term.

Two other present members of the school board, David Lee and James Roemer, were also 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 for an extensive building program to meet expected population growth.

The present school district has an enrollment of 1,900. The high school's present building was completed in 1929. The elementary school's present building was completed in 1932.

In 1958, Bloomfield Hills Junior High School was built, at what is now Lake Elementary school. In 1960, Birdsall Elementary School was completed. In 1962, East Hills Junior High School and George G. Birdsall Elementary School were both completed.

By this time, additions had also been made to Clay Center School to keep pace with student enrollment.

Three superintendents of schools have served since formation of the district. Carroll Monson served from 1942 to 1949. He was succeeded by John James, who resigned in 1958.

Since then Eugene L. Johnson, has guided the district.

Under Johnson, the student population has grown from 700 in 1929 to over 5,000 in 1960. Irving Monson has served one year longer than John James. 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, and Mrs. and Mr. Monson, have come in 1948.

In January, 1967, the junior high school board was increased by two. Its present members besides James Roemer, Lee and Mrs. Monson, are treasurer Max Miller, who has been a board member since 1967, president Dr. Charles Powers, Earl Greena and Richard McGraw.