Louise Lathrup's Vision

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When Is a Village Not a Village?

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Special Writer

Just south of Birmingham in Southfield township is a community—the city of Lathrup Village. Materially this area is not a village because it is too large, and immaterially it is not a city because it is too small.

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 a hamlet.

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

A CITY, WEBSTER SAYS, is any large important or densely populated, political, or inhabited place. That could or could not fit depending on your point of view. In the United States such a place, Webster says, is a municipal corporation occupying a definite area and subject to the state in which it lies as long as its powers and for which it exists as a local government. Again, that fits.

Now, as to the files, we find that the City of Lathrup Village, as Lathrup township was and is described as a real estate promotion around 1923 and designed for that purpose. This land consisted of about 1,000 acres between 10% and 12% of the total land area of a series of farms.

The people who bought these farms had some very fine homes but were paying high taxes to live in a hamlet, in order to preserve what they had before, for themselves, designed in 1938 when the hamlet became independent and incorporated as a city.

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

NOW THE CITY, as the founders of Lathrup Village, Snyder and Good, so aptly named the city, knew from the beginning that the place was not farm land anymore so it could not be designated as Lathrup. The place was too small and the topographical map was just too critical for the incorporation.

Legally every city has the title, and legally a city has such large lots, single family homes, though dropped when written law was changed, that Lathrup legally would not become a city unless it had enough lots, or perhaps another locality, Lathrup, spelled differently, located in the middle of the Michigan state.