

Former mayor witnesses areas growth

Continued from Page 1

"It was just a little town, and the township was completely rural with farms, very productive farms, and lots of orchards," he said. "In the morning, the farmers would bring their milk to the dairy downtown. It was just entirely different than it is now."

AS HAMLIN remembered it, another

carrier of the month Farmington



Chuck Voss

The March Carrier of the Month is Chuck Voss, 13, a student at OE Duncel School. He is the son of Roy and Ellen Voss. Chuck is active in Boy Scout troop 283 where he recently was awarded the Order of the Arrow after having raised \$300 for to fight cystic fibrosis. He is also active in soccer and baseball leagues. Chuck notes that his older brother, Ray, 17, was named both a carrier of the month and the year at the Farmington Observer and Chuck hopes to follow in his footsteps. His favorite subjects are math, science, geography, art and drafting. He plans to go on to college and become a psychologist.

If you want to be a Farmington Observer carrier, please call
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man's misfortune was responsible for his start in Farmington.

"I came down to visit my cousin in Detroit, intending to get a job somewhere, probably in an automobile plant," he said. "He was a salesman. I went with him on his route one day, and we stopped in Farmington. A man named Herman Schroeder had the only meat market in town. But he was closed that day because he was home sick. My cousin went to see him and told him about his route one day, and we got the meat orders out for the weekend and that I'd help."

"Herman came over that night all bundled up (he had the flu) and asked me if I'd stay on and help him for a few days until he felt better."

Hamlin, having nothing better to do, accepted. He commuted daily from Detroit on an interurban train to a job that blossomed into about eight months of steady employment.

"Finally, my brothers came down and took my job, and I went off selling real estate," Hamlin said.

Arriving as a Realtor, Hamlin eventually accumulated enough money to buy the market, located on Grand River about where the Old Village Inn tavern is today, from Schroeder. The store was renamed Hamlin's Market.

"There was not much to it as a market," Hamlin recalled. "It had an ice refrigerator — you'd put the ice up above. Of course, those were the days when you were selling three pounds of hamburger for a quarter."

YEARS LATER, during the Great Depression, Hamlin moved the market a few doors southeast on Grand River to a building he purchased for about \$4,000.

This location, which had been a bank and was to serve as a city hall, was home for Hamlin's Market until he sold it in 1944. Over the years, he added electric refrigeration and a full line of groceries.

After selling the market, Hamlin opened a bowling establishment, Farmington Lanes, which is operated today by his son Fred.

"Your social life was pretty well confined to your own little area with your Eastern Star dances and your parties and such," Hamlin said of his life in Farmington half a century ago. "The roads weren't good like they are now and you didn't travel all over."

"But that interurban was really something. You could get on in Farmington and go just about anywhere. . . Port Huron, Ann Arbor, just about anywhere."

Hamlin, who was elected to the city commission shortly after going into business, remembered that Farmington was no hotbed of politics.

"We were just a group of citizens trying to run the town," he said. "If somebody new happened to come to town and showed some interest in the city, we'd decide that he'd make a good man on the commission."

"Well, he'd be asked, and if he accepted, there'd usually be no problem getting him in. Usually, there'd be no competition."

HAMLIN RECALLED that he was part of a group that drafted Farmington's first zoning ordinances back in the late 1930s.

"There were a lot of problems in those days," he said. "Anybody could do or build anything they wanted. We had no planning at all."

Howard Warner was the mayor at the time, and I was on the commission. I kept hollering about having no planning or zoning, so he appointed me a committee of one and told me to do something about it."

"I got two other fellows. . . and we held meetings for a year. We met with all the old-time builders about good building practices, and we finally got our code down. I remember the entire cost of building up our code came to \$27."

Back then, Farmington was run by a commission with the mayor acting as manager, and things ran smoothly enough in its small-town days.

"It was a very small operation," Hamlin said. "I think we had two policemen and a volunteer fire department."

But Farmington's problems started multiplying in the early '50s when thousands of Detroiters started looking at the area as a desirable place to live. Hamlin found himself dealing with a constant stream of road, drain and sewer problems.

"I felt it was too much for a mayor who had to earn his living somewhere else," he said. "I got to where I was going up to city hall every morning for an hour or two to try and get things going."

"Of course, there was no pay, or it was very minimal, \$5 a meeting, or something like that."

HAMLIN PROPOSED the city-manager form of government, which provides for a professional to run the city, for Farmington in the late '40s and early '50s. Commissioners were cool to the idea at first, Hamlin remembered, although the newly formed Junior Chamber of Commerce supported it, as did Farmington Enterprise editor Jim Tagg.

Farmington finally changed over to the council-city manager form of government, but not until after Hamlin had left office.

As mayor, Hamlin automatically

was on the old Oakland County Board of Supervisors (he called the Oakland County Commission), and spent much of his time in Pontiac, the county seat.

"My whole act more or less was

in Pontiac," said Hamlin, who spent 14 years (1956-69) as chairman of the board. His long years of service earned him a title — Mr. Oakland County.

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