



By Philip H. Power  
Publisher

## OBSERVATION POINT

# Congratulations To Farmington Hills, The Area's Newest City

Last week they made a new city up in Farmington, when on July 2 the first city council members of the City of Farmington Hills were sworn in, terminating the existence of Farmington Township and inaugurating a new unit of local government.

The ceremonies marked yet another instance of what has become a fairly regular pattern of development in these rapidly growing suburbs.

Initially, when population density was low and needs for services slight, pieces of land were incorporated as townships, as was the case in Livonia or Westland (formerly called Nankin Township). When concentrations of people warranted it, villages were created as in the case of Plymouth or Farmington, both incorporated as villages in 1867.

As growth continued and the needs grew for fire and police protection and road construction, gradually townships and villages gave way to home rule cities with expanded local government powers.

Livonia Township became a city in 1930; Plymouth Village became a city in 1932; Nankin Township became the City of Westland in 1964 and Southfield emerged into cityhood in 1957.

Looked at in this light, the development of Farmington Township into a new city is a simple, appropriate, sensible response to the fact of growth. With a population of 50,000 the township had developed to the point where the restrictions of the township form of government had simply become too bothersome to be allowed to continue.

Hence, a new city, Farmington Hills, now joining the ranks of only 262 other incorporated cities in the state.

OF COURSE, there was much, much more to it than that.

There were various annexation attempts by the old City of Farmington which antagonized township residents fearing loss of tax base. There was a remarkable community-wide effort put forth to consolidate the city, the township and the villages within the township into a new unified city. This sensible idea failed when the voters of Farmington City turned down the ballot proposition.

Township residents immediately turned to work at obtaining city status, and literally hundreds of people worked countless hours first getting voter approval to write a city charter, then writing that document, and finally campaigning successfully for its passage.

Working carefully, patiently, modestly in this process was the man who deserves to be called the father of Farmington Hills: Bob McConnell.

He's not physically a big man, or a very impressive public speaker, but he's able, he's per-

sistent, and he has that knack of working with people, and as the last supervisor of Farmington Township and the first mayor of Farmington Hills, he deserves every word of congratulation he gets.

THE INAUGURAL ceremonies up in the modern township (oops, city) hall on 11 Mile Road were simple, small town and impressive.

The Farmington Community Concert Band (Bill Conroy's grand idea for community pride and fun) looked smart in its black and red uniforms. They played "It's Only Just Begun," and got a laugh from the crowd of 300 or so who jammed the auditorium.

Friendly, if competitive, greetings came from the City of Farmington officials, who presented the new city with a wheelbarrow and shovel as a start for the new city department of public works.

Municipal Judge Mike Hand presented plaques of appreciation to outgoing township officials: Clerk Floyd Cairns, Treasurer Thomas Nolan, and Trustee L. David Stader. As Cairns, the friendly, persistent, wishy man who had done so much for the township for so many years, was given his plaque, the entire au-

dience rose in spontaneous applause; if you watched carefully, you could see his lower lip tremble just a little in the emotion of the moment.

Standing erect with red, white and blue boutonnieres at their lapels, the new city council (Keith Deacon, Joan Dudley, Frederick Lichtman, McConnell, Earl Oppenheimer, William Ortmann and Margaret Schaeffer) were sworn in by Frederick Ziem, Presiding Judge of the Oakland County Circuit Court.

IT WAS AN ending and a beginning, and a moving moment.

It was particularly moving for me, since I stood there watching a new city take birth before my eyes. I recalled that a man named Arthur Power had in 1824 come from Farmington, New York, to Michigan woods and wilderness and made the first settlement not three miles from the new city hall.

The diary his son kept is still in our family, and I wondered if the fierce old Quaker pioneer could have imagined what eventually would become of his little settlement.

A city! Congratulations, Farmington Hills.

IN A WORD...

Congratulations

Congratulations

Congratulations

FARMINGTON HILLS!

## Mail Rates Soaring, Service Worse Than Ever

Interesting indeed are reports from Washington that the Postal Service Corporation will seek another increase to 10 cents, up two cents from the current rate of eight cents, for first class letters.

E.T. Klaasman, head of the corporation, cites rising costs as the reason for the request. The major item is payroll where employees are demanding hikes to conform with those given federal government workers.

Strange that Klaasman should ask for an increase in rates when the postal service is just about the poorest it ever has been. Principally due to cutbacks ordered by the corporation, slashes have cut the ranks to a point where many consider it just above the "skelton" point.

It will be recalled that mail deliveries during the Christmas rush were the slowest in years because postmasters were told not to use additional help and not to make any effort to deliver on the day before Christmas, a Sunday.

Thus, trucks loaded with thousands of parcels and Christmas cards were not unloaded on the Saturday before the holiday and remained in the post office lots until the day after Christmas.

That's just one of the things that have been irking folks in all parts of the land. Delivery was poor then and apparently it has become worse since.

Especially is this true in the suburbs and we point our finger to the seven communities in which the Observer newspapers are circulated.

We don't believe customers would find fault with an additional two-cent hike in the cost of mail deliveries if the deliveries were made within a reasonable time period.

Remember back when it cost two cents for a first class letter which arrived at its destination within a day or two, even though going halfway across the continent?

Remember the one-cent post

cards and the days when one sent a special delivery letter and knew it would be in the hands of the receiver the next day?

Those days are gone forever. In fact, we recall reading about the eventful days of the pony express and often wonder if it wouldn't be better to have that kind of service today. At least, folks then knew the letter would arrive eventually... unless the rider was cut down by an Indian tribe... and were content to have it reach destination.

Now one expects a message to go from Livonia to Plymouth or from one point in Livonia to another in one day. That's what people believe is taking place when they put a letter in the box today and believe it will be there tomorrow.

One should warn all, don't pay your taxes by mail on the next last day and expect to meet the deadline. Our experience of recent date is that items placed in the mail today may not reach an-

other address in the same city for as many as five days.

This came to light a few days ago when a news item was mailed to the Observer offices on Schoolcraft in Livonia from a point at Six Mile and Middle Belt, also in Livonia, on a Thursday afternoon and arrived the following Monday. Lucky for the newspaper, the item wasn't of a rush type because it never would have been published in time.

We must point out this isn't the fault of the carriers; it is the fault of the new systems used by the Postal Service. They may be designed for better and quicker service but when one considers the distance involved was less than five miles... then we must shout "bring back the pony express, it would have made the delivery the next day."

Similar experiences have occurred in recent dates with delivery from Birmingham to Southfield taking four or five days, from Livonia to Plymouth four days, from Redford Township to Livonia four days. All of which makes one wonder when Congress will finally decide the Postal Service Corporation is not doing the job it is supposed to.

Out Canton Township way, homeowners have been blasting Plymouth Postmaster John Mulligan for failure to arrange door to door deliveries in the many new subdivisions that have sprung up like flowers in late spring.

Sure, the homes have mail service, but that is saying a lot and leaves a great deal to be desired... the delivery is in boxes at the end of the street. We can remember the scenes of our childhood when there could be as many as 35 boxes in a single cluster and folks walked as far as a half-mile to get their mail.

That was a long time ago and it would seem logical the postal service would have improved over the years. Apparently not, for the same tale of woe seems to come from every new subdivision developed.

It wasn't so long ago that Livonia dedicated its new post office on Merriman Road while pickets surrounded the place. These weren't employees making demands, but homeowners in a new development along Six Mile

Road seeking home-to-home delivery.

Eventually their demands were met but it took a long time. The demonstration, coming as it did, showed how desperate these people were. Imagine picking up a dedication to prove their point.

The late Arthur Jenkins, long-time postmaster at Livonia, rapped the cutbacks in service more than once to friends. It was his contention that local post offices could not continue the kind of service he took so much pride in unless permitted to add more workers.

He pointed out that Livonia was growing and needed more and more mailmen to make deliveries but he couldn't get permission to add any unless homeowners protested as they did at the dedication.

He realized service was getting worse and worse and he hoped the delays in deliveries, especially two and three days to handle items in Livonia alone.

"Just think," he often said, "A letter mailed in Livonia to an address in Livonia taking three days. That's the kind of service the system has forced us into."

Perhaps that's why the Postal Service Committee of the Congress is holding a hearing Friday morning at 9 in the City-County building. The group headed by Rep. James Hanley (D-NY) will take testimony from mayors, unions, businessmen, neighborhood groups etc.

Rep. William Ford (D-Michigan) is the only member from this state.

Mayor Eugene McKinney of Westland; Canton Twp. Supervisor Phil Dingeldey, and others from the area plan to testify.

The committee will hear complaints from the townships that new subdivisions are not getting proper mail service and that the Postal Service Corporation is not getting the job done.

If you are in a business that receives as much mail daily as Observer Newspapers, then you'll have to agree that the service today isn't as good as the days of the pony express. Five days for a delivery from only four miles away. That has to be a case of where the snail is faster than the mail.

## Editorial & Opinion

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Philip H. Power, Publisher

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A U.S. Senator - who should have more sense - has recently proposed that sessions be televised like for the country.

I have never seen a Senate in a live session, but if it is like a local school board, township board, or city council in action, I'd rather watch the TV commercials instead.

The Senate proposal is similar to a Westland service club which suggested privately several years ago that the city council sessions be carried live on a local radio station.

The proposal was never carried out, and the radio listeners can thank their lucky stars for that.

Westland city council meetings are probably similar to those in neighboring cities.

For those legions of thousands of people who never attended a council meeting, rest in comfort knowing that you haven't missed much in the area of political science.

In some meetings, the highlight

is the recital of the pledge of allegiance.

In other sessions, the highlight is the "citizens' comments" or "public discussion" as it is called in some of our suburbs.

Like the U.S. Senate, the best council discussions are held in private or in study sessions open to the press, equivalent to the Senate's committee hearings.

At the study sessions, the issues are dealt with in clear, concise terms and usually involve issues of substance.

We said before the study sessions should be held in public and the public business meetings held in private.

But on live radio or TV? I'd rather watch the TV stations' National Anthem signoffs for sheer pleasure.

By LEONARD POGER