

Why So Many Centennials?

By TIM RICHARD

Farmington did it. Plymouth did it. Marine City, Brighton and a host of other towns around Michigan did it.

Celebrated centennials, that is. WHY SO MANY centennials in 1967? It's strange that everyone is becoming 100 years old at once, because the towns were all settled at different times.

In fact, most were founded in the period from 1824 to 1832. This was after the Erie Canal was opened, and settlers from New York, Connecticut and other eastern states began flocking to the old, northwest territory.

What they're all celebrating is the 100th anniversary of their incorporation as villages.

It seems that 100 years ago there was considerable ferment for clusters of people to seek

the last word

village status in order to solve their problems at home.

Precisely what the problems were that prompted the new legal status isn't clear. This newspaper has consulted every major history of Michigan and the pamphlets of the State Civil War Centennial Observance Commission with no success trying to find the answer.

They discuss state politics, organized religion, industry, mining, life on the farm, high school education, immigration... but not municipal government.

FINALLY, THE Michigan Municipal League—a service, educational and lobbying organization with headquarters in Ann Arbor—came up with what seems to be a reasonable answer.

Interestingly, it wasn't one of the big gun professors or historians or city managers who

provided the answer. It was a young staff assistant named David L. Norrgard, writing in the March 1966 issue of the MML's magazine, the Michigan Municipal Review.

In a nutshell, the answer is that in 1857 the Legislature passed a general law for the incorporation of villages after 30 years of inactivity when no municipal corporations had been organized as such.

MICHIGAN HAD, until that time, an extremely weak tradition in local government.

Norrgard writes that the French and English followed a pattern of either military rule or civilian governor and administrative council.

In 1815 Detroit was incorporated as a city. In 1820 Monroe followed suit.

Then there was total inactivity for 30 years.

Michigan's first constitution in 1837 was silent on local government, but the second constitution in 1850 provided for the election of judicial and other officers of cities and villages. It also gave the Legislature powers to confer powers to cities and villages.

The Legislature responded with a general law in 1857 and then with specific acts for each unincorporated community sought village status.

There is no discussion in any text of what motivated the rash of village incorporations after 1857, but it's not difficult to guess.

Urban merchants may have wanted paved streets that farmers were reluctant to vote for in the township annual meeting; they may have wanted their own fire departments or water systems, which farmers couldn't use... a lot of reasons like that.

THE CHARTERS which Plymouth and Farmington and other villages got were a far cry from the charters of today.

The Legislature then had to say about the form of government of a municipality. Someone with an ax to grind—perhaps a legislator himself—would present a written charter, and the other members would pass it pretty routinely.

In 1908 Michigan became a pioneer in the "home rule" movement. Cities and to some extent villages could, by a vote of the people, decide whether they wanted wards or at-large elections, partisan or non-partisan ballots, mayors or city managers, and a host of other questions.

But the 1857 law was a beginning.

And in 1867, a lot of pioneer communities took advantage of it.

That's why there are so many centennials this year.

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"They" said Huber, "are in favor of superimposing another government—namely the Council of Governments—right over the top of local government without any study of the many problems involved."

Esch, McDonald Mild Conservatives

Overland Congressmen Marvin Esch (2nd District) and Jack McDonald (18th District) rate as mild conservatives, according to Americans for Constitutional Action.

ACA, a national conservative group, rates all lawmakers on a 0 to 100 scale, depending on their voting records. Legislators who agree with all of ACA's positions get high scores, and liberals get low scores.

Esch, a Republican from Ann Arbor, was marked 65. McDonald, a Republican from Redford Township, scored 73.

By way of comparison, the average House Republican

scored 79.08 and the average Democrat 24.74.

Michigan Democrats scored from 0 to 13. Michigan Republicans ranged from 39 to 100.

House GOP Leader Gerald R. Ford of Grand Rapids scored 78.

Republican Sen. Robert Griffin got a 73. Democratic Sen. Philip A. Hart received a zero.

ACA made its ratings for the first six months of 1967 on the basis of 18 Senate and 24 House roll calls. Issues included the consular treaty with the Soviet Union, increasing the debt limit, taxation and foreign aid.

ACA generally opposes expansion of contacts with Communist nations and increased spending.

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Fight Is On Issues -Huber

"The split in the Republican party in Oakland County is not a Huber-Farnham quarrel, as many have tried to present it, but instead a legitimate disagreement on the issues of property rights, personal rights, and the question of the rule of men versus the rule of law."

So said State Sen. Robert Huber (R-Troy) at the first annual summer rally of the conservative Republican Citizens Committee of Oakland County, last week.

Huber said there are philosophical differences between the members of Huber's Republican Citizens Committee and the official Republican Committee headed by Joseph Farnham. Under Farnham's leadership, Huber said, the Republican Committee said nothing when the governor and the Legislature "deliberately wrote the recent income tax legislation to deny the citizen his constitutional right of public referendum."

"They" said Huber, "are in favor of superimposing another government—namely the Council of Governments—right over the top of local government without any study of the many problems involved."

The trial will be held Sunday, Sept. 24, at 31775 Grand River, Farmington. Judge will be Ralph Bergstrom of Oak Lawn, Ill.

Secretary is Mrs. Thelma Gohban, 12233 Ward, Detroit.

System Group Opens Season

The North Detroit Chapter of the Systems and Procedures Association will hear Bret Bell, senior management scientist of Burroughs Corp., as the lead-off man for the season's opener starting at 8:30 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 13, at Rotunda Inn, Orchard Lake.

The topic will be "Designing a Management Information System."

Call Eugene Neph, 537-1700, for reservations or additional information.

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Dog Obedience Deadline Set

Entries close Tuesday, Sept. 12, at 8 p.m. for the Detroit German Shepherd Dog Obedience Training Club's ninth annual specialty obedience trial.

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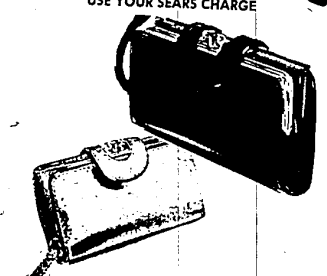
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