

OBSERVATION POINT

By PHILIP H. POWER
PUBLISHER

A Proposal To Help Save Historical Sites

As the pace of development in the suburbs accelerates, so, too, does interest in preserving what's left of the honored remains of the past.

In Livonia, the city council is still trying to figure out a way to come up with enough money to acquire the old Wilson farm, a city and state historical landmark. Plymouth residents shuddered when sale of the old Garber farm was announced, until it became fairly clear that the old farmhouse on the property would be preserved.

Civic leaders in Farmington, which is gearing up for its 150th birthday next year, are talking about how nice it would be to move some of the over 100-year-old buildings into a central area and make it into sort of Greenfield Village. The old mill at

Nankin Mills in Hines Park is throbbing with visitors.

ALL THIS interest in the past is coming at a time when the folks down in Washington are scratching around for something suitable to do in honor of the nation's 200th birthday in 1976.

You may recall that several years ago a Bicentennial Commission was launched with great fanfare. Philadelphia was designated as the key city for the celebration, and grandiose plans were put forward for expositions, historical pageants, traveling historical shows and the like.

Since then, all has collapsed. The Philadelphia committee dissolved in acrimony and lack of money; the Bicentennial Commission itself was stacked with political appointees who seemed more interested in making sure their business interests were

better served than the 200th anniversary of our country. About the only proposal that got much publicity, and that mocking, was one to put out special red, white and blue Coke bottles for the occasion.

Since then, silence on the bicentennial. I assume something is being planned on the federal level, but given the government's certain propensity to lose up anything given it, I really don't expect too much more than large numbers of helium-filled balloons.

WHICH BRINGS ME back to the folks in this area who are working so hard to try to preserve a little bit of our nation's past before it's bulldozed by the pace of development.

Their major problem is lack of money. For example, it seems that the value of the Wilson farm and land in Livonia is around \$200,000, and that's a lot of money for even a big city to come up with.

Since the national Bicentennial folks don't seem to have come up with much more than red, white and blue Coke bottles, why not have a major part of the national program lie in direct grants to communities for the preservation of historical structures?

Such a program would have a number of advantages. It would honor our nation's past, provide a lasting monument instead of boring windy celebration speeches, be under local control, meet a real need, and reduce the kind of inappropriate showbiz merchandising mentality that seems to have taken over the Bicentennial planners.

Of course it would be expensive. One million dollars to each state is \$50 million, but my guess is that at least twice that sum will be spent for the national celebration with nothing left afterward to show for it. That's a good buy these days.

Phil Thompson writes

Same Slow Service To Cost More

Judging from Washington reports, the cost of mailing a letter will soar to 10 cents next January if a proposed across-the-board increase is approved by the Postal Rate Commission.

That's the plan of Postmaster General Elmer T. Klassen, who has sought such an increase for almost a year but has done little or nothing to better the mail service at the same time.

Klassen has a big job ahead. First he must sell the increase to the PRS which in turn must recommend approval by the board of governors of the U.S. Postal Service. The last mentioned has the final say...that is, assuming the Cost of Living Council doesn't object.

If the Cost of Living Council does object, and it might well in this instance, then the proposed increases may go down the drain.

The proposed across-the-board hike would include a boost in air mail costs from 11 to 13 cents, an increase of 38 per cent for second class mail, 25 per cent for third class and six per cent for fourth class parcel post.

All of which could possibly result in increased subscription rates for magazines and all other publications, a hike in the costs of all newspapers received through the mail, and a boost in the charges for mailing packages.

In the initial analysis, the first thought was that the Postal Service was boosting costs at a time when the mail volume would climb by as much as 40 to 50 per cent...we're referring to the annual Christmas card and gift package rush. Everyone knows of the way the mail backs up in the two or three weeks ahead of the biggest holiday of the year.

But Klassen is trying to get the increase approved to take effect in early January. At least he had sense enough not to ruffle people at a time when they know, and he knows, expenses will be the highest of the entire year.

Once again it's time for folks to take a good look at the mail service picture and determine for themselves whether Klassen has good reasons for his proposals or whether he's asking a lot for little in return.

Those in the communities covered by the Observer Newspapers are well aware that mail deliveries have gone backward for the past several years.

Gone are the days when a person could mail a letter in Plymouth on Monday and know it would arrive in Livonia on Tuesday. Gone are the days when one could put a check in the mails in the suburbs and know it would

be in Detroit on time for payment the next day.

Despite the installation of the zip codes, which were to expedite delivery, it takes two and more often than not three days for a letter mailed in the Farmington post office to arrive in Garden City.

So for service like this, the American public is going to have to pay 38 per cent more. One knows without

waiting the increase will get back to the readers' pockets.

The poor delivery is not the fault of the mail carriers who try to speed up service as much as possible but can't because of the system.

The system was devised by Klassen who was made postmaster general because of his industrial background where he reportedly gained a reputation for efficiency and

in speeding up operations.

It's time for the public to take a hand in the matter and protest any increases in postal rates unless there is a guaranteed promise of better service.

Ten cents today compared to three cents years ago, and overnight delivery then compared to two and three days now...that's a lot of money to pay for nothing new and no improvements.

Phil Richard writes

Deserved Honors For Warner

It was gratifying to students of history to see the Farmington Board of Education name a new junior high school for Fred M. Warner, one of only two Observersland residents ever to serve as governor of Michigan.

The only unfortunate thing was that Farmington built 27 other schools before naming one for its most prominent political son.

Warner was more than just another man of affairs moving through the chairs of public life. His administration (1905-10) established the first state highway department, built the first mile of concrete road, began the regulation of railroads and insurance companies, established workmen's compensation and founded what is now Western Michigan University.

A merchant and cheese manufacturer, Warner was Michigan's first three-term governor and first foreign-born governor (England). (John B. Swainson was born in Canada and George Romney in Mexico. Swainson, incidentally, resided awhile in Plymouth, which that school board should keep in mind if he completes his political career without scandal.)

All of which raises the question of what policies or feelings of priorities school boards use when placing a name on a building.

Redford Union and Clarencerville boards had no problem with their high schools because they're single-school districts. Garden City, split by Middle Belt Road, opted for East and West.

Livonia names its elementary schools for presidents and Supreme Court chief justices, its junior high for poets and its senior highs for generally "great" men.

So the board found itself in the perfectly ridiculous position of naming an elementary school for one of the world's greatest war heroes and a two-term president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and a senior high for the man he beat twice by landslide margins, Adlai E. Stevenson.

The biggest job Stevenson ever held was ambassador to the United Nations, and if you think that's important, try to remember the names of his predecessor (nope, not Henry Cabot Lodge) and his successor.

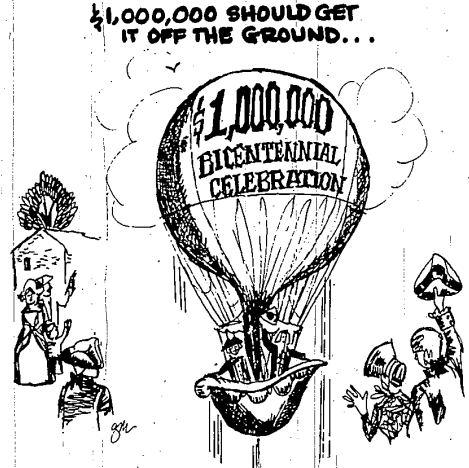
If Livonia had to name a high school after a Democrat, a better choice would have been Lewis Cass, a territorial governor of Michigan who went on to the Senate and to the War Dept. portfolio and also was a Democratic presidential candidate.

In fact, Cass won more electoral votes (127) when he ran in 1848 than Stevenson got (89) 104 years later when the Electoral College had doubled in size. Yet Cass rates only an elementary.

Ignoring the likes of Copernicus, Galileo, Dalton, Steinhilber, Einstein and Von Braun, the Wayne-Westland board named a high school for John H. Glenn Jr. The first American astronaut to circle the globe in a spaceship is a fine fellow, but already his achievements have been overshadowed, and one suspects that in time his choice will seem "dated."

If some men seem prominent today, it is because they stand on the shoulders of giants of the past. And so it was good to see the Farmington school board reach back 83 years into history to name a junior high for a man who had been an alderman, mayor, state representative, secretary of state and three-time governor.

Hurray for Fred M. Warner Junior High!



Teachers Are Just Like Other Union Members

READERS' FORUM

Please type (or write clearly) and limit letters to 300 words.

- Letters must be signed, with the writer's address. Names will be withheld only at the writer's request and for good cause.
- The editor reserves the right to reject unsuitable letters.

EDITOR:

It is interesting to note, at least at this time, that the only strikes that seem to elicit the most reduction are teacher strikes. It brings out those like Pete Waldmeier who obviously will be running for the Detroit school board soon and it brings out others who, like him, are equally uninformed.

Strikes by the UAW, Teamsters and the like are today met with little, if any, public outrage. The difference seems to be that a strike by "public" employees is something wholly and completely deplorable. The irony is that objections to public employees' strikes are made by the very people who should understand - other union members.

If only these people would be able to see that when they criticize teachers' strikes, they put themselves in a management position - and sound like it. It's all relative, I guess.

The law that denies public employees the recourse to strikes, afforded all other unions, is a bad one and needs to be wiped from the books. If it were, the result would be, I think, a greater concern among teachers to truly and at length debate the advisability of using such an onerous thing as a strike.

The responsibility will loom very large.

School boards will really find themselves in the role of the "heavy" in these situations because teachers will have exhausted all possibilities by the time they feel forced to strike.

I have read the editorials and letters to the editor since the teacher strikes started this September. They have all plastered the teachers as the heavies in these "wildholdings of services." Not one critic has wondered if school boards might bear some responsibility for the recent rash of teacher strikes.

All I ask is that you ask your school board WHEN they had the opportunity to START negotiations and when they actually DID start negotiations.

And then ask your school board what "Wayne 36" means. The Livonia Education Assn. was ready to start negotiations with the school board on May 1.

As a resident of Livonia for 20 years, as a parent whose six children have gone through Livonia's public schools, and as a Livonia teacher for 20 years, I ask you the reader to review the facts. Find out what the facts really are and then react. Find out what all parties have to say before you react emotionally.

Those who criticize a teacher strike because a football game might be interfered with leave me cold. Would these same concerned citizens react as strongly if math, home economics, electronics, art or music classes were curtailed or eliminated?

'Search Souls,' Teachers Told

EDITOR:

To all Livonia school personnel:

The children in Livonia are not in school and you are responsible. Over the years you have demanded:

1. teachers are not disciplinarians,
 2. more money,
 3. more benefits,
 4. smaller classrooms.
- So now after years of demands you all forget the most important thing: the education of a child. This is the job you chose.

So, if you don't want the responsibility of watching a child grow and develop through education, protect our children and find other employment where you have all the benefits you think you need.

A teacher who cares could teach a class of 50 children, and the love and admiration the children return is a salary no other job in the world would ever pay you well.

There are more parents in this city who care about these children and the quality of education they receive, and in return for good teachers, these pupils are taught at home discipline, respect and are prepared for school.

So, come on - search your souls and find the values you were taught as a child in Sunday School. This is your moral obligation.

A LIVONIA PARENT AND TEACHER

MRS. JOHN HAWTHORNE
Livonia

Resignation Ends Conflict Cries

A Wayne-Westland school board member resolved a year-long conflict of interest controversy by resigning last week.

Charles Griffin, elected in June, 1972, made his decision after taking a new job as a teachers' union administrator in western Wayne County.

handling districts in Plymouth, Van Buren and Northville.

There was substantial public debate when Griffin was campaigning for the board seat last year while he was working as a teachers' union official in the Flint area.

The Observer editorially commented during that campaign that while Griffin is certainly qualified for the board position, the ethical conflict of interest issue should be pointed out to voters.

Actually, we felt a bit stronger than that.

We said that putting a teachers' union representative on a school board is like putting the fox in the chicken coop.

In his new full-time job in western Wayne County, Griffin would have been in an impossible position to defend, if he continued to serve on the school board.

The new job would have him negotiating teachers' contracts in districts bordering the one on which he is a board member prior to management-negotiating secrets.

Griffin should have resigned long ago, according to his critics on his own school board, but at least the conflict has been eliminated and the board can back to its work without wasting time on the conflict of interest issue created by Griffin's election.

Correction

On July 5, 1973, this newspaper published a column by Tim Richard discussing an "open meeting bill" introduced into the state legislature, which would prohibit all public bodies from having a secret meetings and which would carry misdemeanor penalties for violation. This column also made reference to Kenneth Perrin, former president of the Farmington school board, which held a series of private meetings some months ago in connection with the superintendent's termination.

A misreading of the statements made about Perrin in that column might indicate that we were accusing him of criminal behavior. We did not, and we are sorry if the statements in the column were construed by any reader in that way.

The point of the column was that firmer legal control over secret meetings by public bodies is needed, and that a good way to get it is to have legislation with teeth in it. We may disagree with Perrin over this public issue, but we have no intention of casting aspersions on his honesty or integrity.

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Editorial & Opinion

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