



# Farmington Observer

Volume 96 Number 93

Thursday, August 29, 1985

Farmington, Michigan

72 Pages

Twenty-five cents

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## Orchard Lake Road — a study in change

By Tom Henderson  
staff writer

**W**HAT THE RAILROADS began in 1897, commercial development will soon complete, as the times, they are a'changing along Orchard Lake Road.

In 1896, things in Farmington Township were much as they had been for 50 years. Farmers worked the soil and when they died, their sons worked it. A man or a woman with a sharp eye could even still follow the three old

Indian trails that traversed the township.

There weren't enough roads to bother naming them, except maybe for the Detroit and Howell Plank Road, which was made of millions of board feet of beech and oak. In later years, it would be called Grand River and extend, incredibly enough, all the way to Lansing.

The Twentieth Century began three years early in Farmington, when, in 1897, the Detroit Urban Railway began building its electric rail line from present-day Grand River north to where Orchard Lake Road began at 12 Mile Road. Naturally enough, Orchard Lake Road soon was extended south, and things have been changing since, slowly at first — a farm

farm sold there.

IN 1896, there were 24 parcels of land along what today is Orchard Lake Road between Grand River and 14 Mile Road, most of them 80 acres. Today, along what has become one of the hottest corridors in American real estate, the orchards are gone, the houses are going and past rushes frenetically into future much faster than seems normal, or possible. Cars zoom by, office buildings zoom up, business zooms on.

And, yet, the past exists still in glimmering patches along the road — in stone foundations, wild grapes, converted airplane hangers, painted old buggies, chicken coops and greasy spoons.

From 14 Mile Road south to Grand River, Orchard Lake Road is a primer on urban and suburban development, on what has been and will be. It begins with a Japanese steak house and ends with a Chinese restaurant; in between is everything. Come, take a

look, while there's still a lot to look at:

"THIS IS THE most wonderful place you'll ever see if you want to sell something," drawled Larry Dalton, an anachronism along Orchard Lake Road, but not an anachronism for long. He farms five acres just south of 13 Mile Road. Four years ago, he was the last person to sell an ox in Farmington Hills. He raises corn, tomatoes, potatoes, squash and pumpkins. In one old shed, he repairs ancient buggies he sells out front, along the highway, for up to \$1,400.

From the road, you can see his chicken coop and roosters, but not his horse, Chief, the coral, or the thick woods out back. Sheds are filled with old farm implements in different states of repair, harnesses, wooden buggy shafts, huge iron wheels and not-even-Dalton-knows what all.

Dalton moved here 14 years ago from Plymouth, when his farm there got crowded by civilization. Again, "It's time to move on," said Dalton. "You can see what it's like around here. They're closing the little guys out —" taking the farm out of Farmington.

Last month, Dalton became

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a wealthy man. On July 13, he sold five acres of the hottest real estate this side of Manhattan. By Nov. 13, he, his wife, Bonnah, and son, Jerry, must be gone. Progress awaits.

"It's changed a hell of a lot in 14 years. I never would have thought it," said Dalton. "They're hardly ever a minute day or night when there ain't a car going by. We're looking for a place near here, but we haven't found anything, yet. I don't need a lot of land any more, but I would like an acre for Chief. We're gonna keep him."

JUST NORTH of the Dalton spread is the LaSalle bump shop, a converted airplane hanger left from an airport that closed in the '40s. "It's the only building left on Orchard Lake from when I was a child," said Floyd Cairns, the recently retired city clerk in Farmington Hills. Cairns used to ride past the hangar every day on the train to school.

Nine years ago, Orchard Lake and 13 Mile wasn't a particularly hot spot to invest. Max Felscher, then 74 and lurchy to get out of retirement, was looking

for a spot to open a bump shop. "We used to pick pears across the street," said Mary Tracer, who has run Felscher's office since he opened. "It's growing too fast. Too much, you know? But you know who's complaining the most? The mail lady. They used to deliver the mail by truck; now, they're walking."

Along the bump shop is a turret-like structure used by eager civil defense volunteers to search the skies for German bombers and fighters during World War II. When Felscher bought the building, pictures of German planes still hung in the turret. Sometimes, when the sun is hot, he goes up on the roof and sunbathes, oblivious to the constant thrum of the traffic. "Don't say this is an old building," said Max. "We'll be here another 50 years."

A 1940 LaSalle used to stand in front of the shop. It blew a fuel pump, though, and is parked out back. It is just five feet wide, but as long as a day in June, with four leather bench seats. Like the Dalton farm, like the hangar, it is a wonderful anachronism. How long will it last?

JUST SOUTH of Oakland Community College, the road narrows to two lanes. For a brief stretch the woods to the west of Orchard Lake is thick with undergrowth.

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Larry Dalton rubs Chief just a few yards and a couple of light years from the congestion of Orchard Lake Road.

"This is the most wonderful place you'll ever see if you want to sell something."

— Larry Dalton

Photos by RANDY BOST/Staff photographer

## 6 candidates square off for Farmington council

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Two incumbents and a woman are among the six candidates who have thrown their hats into the political ring for seats on the Farmington City Council.

When Farmington voters go to the polls Tuesday, Nov. 5, they will elect three council members. Up for grabs

are seats currently held by councilmen Alton Bennett, Bayard Tupper and Roger Walker. Bennett and Walker are seeking re-election.

The two highest vote-getters in the election will serve four-year terms. The one who comes in third will serve a two-year term, said City Clerk Josephine Busbey.

Elizabeth Mihelich is the first woman seeking election to the council in

about four or five years, Busbey said. No woman has ever been elected to the council.

The six candidates are:

- Bennett, 5408 Alta Loma, is a former mayor seeking election to his fourth term. Bennett is principal of East Middle School.
- Arnold Campbell, 21080 Birchwood, is a member of the city's Economic Development Corporation.
- Gerald Lynch, 3580 Marblehead, is a 13-year veteran of the Farmington Hills police force. This is his second try for a council seat after an unsuccessful bid in 1983.
- Mihelich, 33300 Freedom Road, owns a free-lance public relations business. In 1983, Mihelich was defeated in her bid for a Farmington Board of Education seat.
- Richard Tupper, 23180 Cass, is a

former Farmington council member. Tupper resigned his four-year term on the council in 1982 to devote time to his business. His father, Bayard Tupper, was appointed to fill the remaining years of the term.

• Walker, 22980 Manning, is seeking a second term on the council. He formerly owned his own real estate company and was a member of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of

Commerce Board of Directors. Filing deadline for the council election was Aug. 18.

IN FARMINGTON HILLS, five candidates — three incumbents, a newcomer and a veteran campaigner — previously announced their bids for four city council seats.

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## School's in Farmington district opens classroom doors

By Tom Henderson  
staff writer

It's back-to-school-time for one new principal, 10 new teachers and about 10,000 students in the Farmington Public Schools system. Actually, the teachers got their first taste of classrooms this week at workshops and meetings Wednesday and Thursday.

But school without kids is like a beach without sand — some teachers might say like a dog without fleas — and so things start for real next week.

Tuesday, most students report for afternoon sessions. The exception is for sixth graders, who report in the morning for an orientation to prepare for the trials and tribulations of middle school. On Wednesday, it's all days for all.

The big news, according to Superintendent Lewis Schulman, is the hiring of new teachers. For years, because of declining enrollment, teacher layoffs have been a fact of life in the Farmington schools. There were 40 layoffs last spring, too, but 38 of those laid off have since been recalled. The two still on

layoff refused other job assignments and remain on a recall list.

"I USED TO feel terrible pink-slipping people," said Schulman. "Some of them were marvelous teachers. I'm just so glad we didn't have to terminate anyone this year."

According to Schulman, there were eight teachers not recalled last school year, 20 not recalled in 1983-84 and 40 not recalled in 1984-85.

Schulman said that the first indication of a slowing in the enrollment de-

cline came last year, when the number of elementary students increased by 60. He said this year he expects another increase in elementary enrollment. According to a preliminary survey, kindergarten enrollment alone is expected to increase by about 50, to roughly 700. Don Cowan, formerly the assistant principal at North Farmington, is the new principal at North, replacing Clayton Graham, who moved over to Harrison to replace the retiring Jim Geiger.

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### EARLY DEADLINES

Due to the Labor Day holiday, we will be closed Monday, Sept. 2, 1985. To place your classified ad for Thursday, Sept. 5, please call Tuesday, Sept. 3 between 8 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

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Have a happy and safe

**LABOR DAY**