

Schools Lead City's Growth

Nothing throughout the 36 square miles that comprise the City of Livonia has grown more than the school system.

Starting with three small schools at the turn of the century—Stark, Livonia Center and Elm—it now boasts four high schools, 10 junior high schools, and 35 elementary schools—with a fifth high school under consideration.

And the end is not yet in sight. In the far northwest section of the city there still is much vacant land. When that is developed there will be need for additional buildings. And as the population grows, there will be need for additions and new buildings.

YET, with all the growth and the amazing expansion of facilities, the Livonia schools have kept up with the national pace of instruction and now are rated as good, or better, than most other city systems.

The growth has been so steady that, oftentimes, it has been taken for granted.

One Livonian pointed out the other day—
"When I moved to Livonia back in 1938, I could stand in my back yard and within a one-mile circle we had one or two schools—Livonia Center and Plerston. Now we've got two high schools—Beutley and Stevenson, three junior highs and several elementary schools all in the same circle!"

With the growth, the cost also sky-rocketed and the present budget calls for the expenditure of \$34.5 million—with another bond issue coming up in a few months.

In the 20 years of the city's existence only three men have held the position of superintendent. At the time of incorporation the head man was Harry Johnson, an eternal optimist, who visioned the great present system.

Following him came Benton Yates who retired several years ago to accept a position as head of the education department of the Southeastern Michigan Council of Government. And later, Rolland Upton, who had been business manager under Yates, was elevated to the top post.

There is an ironic touch to the history of the schools in the city in that Johnson, the man who predicted the major growth and kept pleading that plans should be made for it, was relieved of his duties.

But, the growth that Johnson envisioned has come to pass and even has exceeded his dreams.

THROUGH the dissolution of the Nankin Mills School District and other changes in boundaries, the Livonia system has acquired in its school district parts of areas that are now located in the Cities of Westland and Dearborn Heights.

This has brought about a unique situation. The northeast section of the city, commonly known as Clarenceville, is in that school district, while the area across the city limits to the south is in the Livonia district.

That uniqueness doesn't appear on the surface. But the unique and amazing growth is everywhere and the end is not in sight.

Few other school systems have grown as much or as fast.

Band Shell Site Has A History

When Ron Upton, superintendent of schools, announced his proposal for a band shell and an amphitheater in the wooded area between Merriam Rd. and the Buchanan School, it was like an echo out of the past.

This wooded area, one of the most beautiful of all plots in Livonia, was first suggested as a city park and outdoor amphitheater back in 1952.

At that time Harry S. Wolfe, the Realtor at the time who was serving as president of the city council, had hopes of developing it, along with the Lee estate, into a high-class residential area.

But, when approached with the idea of a developing a city park, he agreed and sold the 25-acre parcel to the city for \$8,000.

The purchase started the momentum for a city park and the Livonia Civic Chorus, conducted by Lester McCoy, a professor of music at Ann Arbor, joined forces with the hope of having a band shell and an amphitheater that would accommodate at least 5,000 persons on the slope.

It was not to become a reality, however, as the residents on the Myrna Ave., voicing opposition to such things as baseball diamonds (which

never were planned at the site), succeeding in obtaining an injunction that stopped the plan—until the school board acquired the property and renewed the dream of a music center and a band shell.

Shades of 1952

McNamara Makes It Where Others Failed

Although he has been in office only several months, Mayor Edward McNamara can claim one distinction as the city's chief executive. He is the first member of the city council to make the jump from the legislative body to the top role in the executive branch.

Several council members have tried in the past, only to meet with failure at the polls.

Among them were Harry S. Wolfe, former council president; W. W. Edgar, former vice president of the council; and Peter Ventura, member of the present council, who missed several years ago.

From Open Farmland to Michigan's Largest Volume Enclosed Shopping Mall

Looking back 30 years to the Northwest corner of Middlebelt and West Seven Mile Road one would have seen a small farm set amidst more than 60 acres of pasture.

Today this corner is the home of Livonia Mall, one of the nation's largest, most modern enclosed mall shopping centers.

In addition to providing residents with 52 stores and services in 700,000 square feet of enclosed shopping area, the Mall makes a significant economic contribution to the City of Livonia as its second largest taxpayer, and an employer of 3,500.

The Mall was officially opened on Thursday, October 29, 1964 after five years of labor and a \$25,000,000 investment by owners George Klein and Jack Shenkman.

In 1959 Klein and Shenkman, life long Detroit area residents, purchased the land for the Mall, and touched off a long series of events leading to the final completion of the Mall. First there was the matter of having the land rezoned for commercial use. Then the problems of improvements in highways and sewage facilities had to be resolved. There were long periods of negotiation, but solutions came with the full cooperation of officials of the City of Livonia.

Architects for the completely roofed, all-weather Mall were King and Lewis, a Detroit based firm. The emphasis was on "openness" with large courts, promenades, and an absence of store fronts. Lighting was to be subdued from natural and artificial sources to give emphasis to intense individual store lighting. A large fountain provided a focal point for penny-tossing shoppers and artificial trees were "planted" throughout the Mall.

Schostak Bros. & Co., Inc. acted as leasing agents for Klein and Shenkman. On June 26, 1962 the official announcement of plans for the Mall—with Sears and Crowley's as major tenants—was made.

The Sears store (250,000 square feet) and the Crowley's store (125,000) ranked among the largest ever built for these major retailers. Company officials said that their stores represented "a concrete reflection of their confidence in the economy" of the Livonia area. They also stated that "the presence of two full line department stores will provide a well-rounded shopping center."

In June 1963 ground was officially broken and on Thursday, October 29, 1964 Livonia Mall opened its 40 stores to customers.

Congratulations City of Livonia
on your 20th Anniversary

SEARS

LIVONIA MALL

7 Mile Road at Middle Belt

Sears is proud to be a part of this fast growing city

With a reputation built on good values, fair treatment and customer satisfaction, combined with the success of this growing community, Sears looks forward to sharing the future with our many friends in the City of Livonia.