

A Brief History of



And Surrounds

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1. Acknowledgments

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2 - Native Americans, The War of 1812 and the Founding of Michigan

The first habitants of the Farmington area were the Potawatomi Indians, who migrated to Michigan's low peninsula in the 1400s. They were united with the Ottawa and Ojibwa and called themselves "The Three Fires". The Potawatomi lived in clans and spoke an Algonquian dialect. Their villages were seasonal and usually located along bodies of water like the Rouge River or what now is known locally as Minnow Pond. The men hunted, the women farmed, and both men and women fished in nearby local streams and lakes.

French trappers were the first Europeans to enter Michigan and befriended the local natives to help trap furs. Jean Nicollet was the first white man to reach Michigan and encountered the Potawatomi in 1671. Thirty years later in 1701, Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac founded Detroit, leaving the interior of the state to the Native Americans.

The Potawatomi were allies of the French and fought with them in the wars with the Fox Indians in 1712 and later in the French and Indian War that ended in 1763 when the French were defeated. Under the leadership of Ottawa Chief Pontiac, many Native Americans, including the Potawatomi, attacked the British at Fort Detroit withdrawing only when they learned that the French had signed a treaty ceding land east of the Mississippi to England.

In an effort to make peace with the American Indians, the British developed the Proclamation of 1763 declaring that the natives could retain land to the west of the Appalachians while the colonists would stay to the east. With the start of the American Revolution in 1776, the Potawatomi felt threatened by white settlers who were moving into their territory. The Detroit Potawatomi fought alongside the British in raids of American settlements. This continued after the end of the war, with the hope that white settlers could be kept out of the Michigan area.

President George Washington sent General “Mad Anthony” Wayne to Detroit to end the raids on the settlers.. The Indians chose to make peace when they learned that their British allies were forbidden by their homeland from fighting with their common enemy, the Americans. The result was the Treaty of Greenville, signed in 1795. Under the treaty, Indian land in Ohio and Indiana was sold to the US government. The Potawatomi were not affected and their land would remain untouched until the government decided to negotiate another treaty to buy it from them.

While the US formally established the Michigan Territory in 1805, nothing really changed for the local Native Americans and the British remained in the area and continued to trade with them. In 1807, President Jefferson took over the eastern half of Michigan with the Treaty of Detroit. For the first time, the Potawatomi gave up land including areas that would become Oakland County and Farmington Hills.

Many Indians were dissatisfied with this outcome and, lead by Shawnee brothers Chief Tecumseh and the Prophet Tenskwatawa, and with the encouragement of the British, rose up in revolt in the Battle of Tippecanoe near Lafayette Indiana in 1811. The Native Americans were defeated, but their hostility toward the Americans and their alliance with the British only deepened.

The unrest continued, and, with the War of 1812, Michigan was once again under British control. The defeat of the British by Commander Perry in the Battle of Lake Erie In 1813 returned Michigan to the US and ended the Indian revolt. The British and their Native American allies fled towards Toronto. The local Potawatomi were allowed to return to their remaining land only after agreeing to peace with the Treaty of Springwells in 1815. It was just under 150 years from their first contact with a white man when the Potawatomi ceded the last of their land in the Farmington area in a treaty signed on September 29, 1817. The last of the Indian land in the area was exchanged for formal education of elected

tribal members. The Potawatomi were first relocated to reservations in Wisconsin and later to reservations in Kansas. (The US government subsequently gave this land to the University of Michigan who sold it to raise capital. This led to the interesting question – were members of the Tribe entitled to a free education at the University of Michigan? This question was settled in the well-known case of *White vs. United States Government*.)

In 1815, surveyors came to the interior of Michigan where they found a “vast uncharted wilderness.” Surveyor-general Edward Tiffin reported that “There would not be one acre out of a hundred...that would ... admit to cultivation.... the intermediate space between the swamps and lakes, which is nearly one half the country is, with very few exceptions, a poor barren, sandy land on which scarcely any vegetation grows...” Michigan Territory governor Lewis Cass refused to believe it. In order to meet population requirements of statehood, Cass knew he must entice settlers from the east to Michigan. Traveling northwest, Cass found that the swamps ended about 12 miles outside of Detroit and that the land there was rich and fit for farming with a good water supply.

The first official map of the Farmington area was certified in 1817 and published by the surveyor general. This map showed the Shiawasse Indian trail but did not show the two other major trails, the Grand River and Orchard Lakes trails. The three major roads in the area follow the path of these original trails.

3. Farmington – From Wilderness to Suburb

The US government began selling land in Farmington Township in 1823 for \$1.25 an acre. Among the first to purchase land was Arthur Power, the first white settler in the area who purchased land near what would become 10 Mile and Power Roads. Other early land purchasers included Peleg S Utley who bought the land on the NE corner of Middlebelt and 12 Mile and William B Cogshall of Wayne Co, New York who, on July 7, 1823 obtained the east ½ of section 11

including the land that would become Holly Hill Farms. Patience Utlely, mother of Peleg, died on September 26, 1824 of injuries from a fall that occurred two months earlier as they approached their new home in Farmington. Patience was buried on her son Peleg's farm in what would be called the Utlely cemetery on 12 Mile Road. (Several Holly Hill Farm residents are buried there, in what is now known as East Farmington cemetery.) The Erie Canal opened in 1825 and a flood of settlers from New York and New England entered into the Northwest Territories, including Michigan. One of those who arrived was Clark Cogsdill, who had purchased the land where we now live from William Cogshall.

Nathan Power, a Quaker, was a major influence in the early development of Farmington Township and understood the importance of community. Farmers could not survive alone and needed business and industry to be successful. With that in mind, Power opened potash works in 1825, a sawmill in 1826, and a gristmill in 1827. The potash works provided soap, the sawmill lumber so that the settlers could upgrade their log cabins, and the gristmill ground their grain into flour. Power located his businesses on the Shiawassee Trail, which soon would turn into the Detroit road, connecting the tiny town with the much larger city, Detroit.

The area grew rapidly as more settlers bought land in the area. In 1827, Farmington was organized as a township in the Michigan Territory and became one of the first in the territory to elect all of its public officials including judges, clerk and sheriff. Important first milestones were the First Presbyterian Church, founded in 1826, and the first inn, called the Walker Inn, opened in 1827 at what now is Grand River and Halsted. The Farmington area was well settled by 1830, less than 10 years after the first land purchase.

The final element in the conversion from wilderness to settlement occurred in 1837 with the completion of the Grand River Territorial Road running from Detroit through Farmington to Howell. Even though Indians and settlers had long used

the Grand River Trail, it passed through swamps and marshes, making it a difficult trip. Before the completion of the Grand River Road, settlers preferred to take the Orchard Lake Trail to Pontiac and then the Saginaw Road to Detroit, a trip of 38 miles taking days. The new road cut the trip in half to about 20 miles and one day to travel.

The village of Farmington, then known as Quakertown, was subdivided in 1841 and by 1850 the main business district was well developed. Other local settlements included Sleepy Hollow (Drake and Howard), North Farmington (14 Mile and Farmington Roads), Clarenceville (Grand River and 8 Mile) and English Settlement, (13 to 14 Mile Roads between Inkster and Middlebelt)

English Settlement, which included what would become Holly Hill Farms, was named after the many British settlers who located there. In 1830 John and Mary Wilcox built a sawmill on the SW corner of Middlebelt and 13 Mile. (This building was torn down in the 1980's when the accompanying farm house was moved ½ south to the corner of Spring street and Middlebelt.). John Wilcox was known as a "heavy drinker" and was reported to spend weeks at a time at the Van Every Gristmill and distillery in nearby Franklin. Other businesses in the area included the Bigelow brick company, a cooper or barrel maker, a tannery and a blacksmith shop. Timothy Toleman built the first frame house in Farmington near 12 Mile and Middlebelt in 1828. John and Grace German arrived from Beddelford, England in 1830 buying land that crossed 14 Mile for \$18 an acre, which was considerably more than the \$1.25 the original owners paid for it. In 1843, they donated some of their land south of 14 Mile on the east side of Middlebelt for a school. The German School was one of the best in the area with prominent teachers including circuit court judges, attorneys and postmasters. The building is still standing today.

The anti-slavery movement was born back east where many of Farmington settlers had been born. The many Quakers now living in the area deplored the

living and working conditions forced upon the slaves. It was no surprise that the settlers in Farmington passionately campaigned for the abolishment of slavery. Although there are no written records, local legend has it that the people of Farmington took part in the Underground Railroad. The covert "railroad" helped runaway slaves move from the southern slave states to the safety of Canada, flaunting the Fugitive Slave Law, which made it a crime to assist runaway slaves. Nathan Power and other Quakers are believed to have been "conductors" on the Underground Railroad, escorting slaves, often hidden in wagons under hay or produce from one safe house to another, and finally to Detroit where the slaves would cross the river to Windsor. The Powers home, the Philbrick Tavern (which is still standing on the corner of 11 Mile and Power) and the First Baptist Church were rumored to be stops on the Underground Railroad as it passed through Farmington.

Aaron and Ellen Wilson were two slaves who passed through Farmington on their escape from Virginia to Windsor. After the Civil War, the Wilson's returned to Farmington and settled on 5 acres near 11 Mile and Orchard Lake roads, the Farmington's first African-Canadian-American family. Aaron died in 1908 and Ellen, over 100 years old, died five years later.

After the Confederate attack on Fort Sumpter, President Lincoln telegraphed Michigan governor Blair requesting military assistance from the state. The first man from Michigan to enlist to serve in the Civil War was A.J. Crosby Jr of Farmington. Crosby was one of 797 soldiers assigned to the first company of the first regiment from Michigan and left for Washington DC on May 16, 1861. The people of Washington, afraid of a Confederate attack, were relieved to see the troops from Michigan. President Lincoln is quoted as saying "Thank God for Michigan." 3,018 men from Oakland County would serve their country and 400 would die. Farmington recognized 38 men with connections to Farmington for their service in the Civil War.

Farmington would remain a rural area for the next 100 years while such technological developments as the building of railroads, the telephone, electric power, and the automobile and historic events such as World War I and the Great Depression were changing the way people lived everywhere. The Farmington area was bypassed during the railroad building boom between 1870 and 1890. It wasn't until rail and electrical power was combined in the late 1800's that the DUR – Detroit United Railroad – would bring the electric streetcar to Farmington. Farmington Junction, located at Farmington and Grand River, was the intersection of 4 legs of the DUR. A train yard and powerhouse was built at this location in 1899 to supply the trains and electric power for the routes that traveled down Grand River to Detroit, up Orchard Lake Road Pontiac, and west on 8 Mile Road to Northville and then on to Plymouth..

Since local roads were poor and usually impassable many times each year, the trains had a positive impact on the area and especially for those who lived on the right –of-way of the DUR. The railroad employed many people of the area, and provided quick transportation for people and produce. Milk was one of the main cargos of the DUR, carrying milk from the local dairy farms to dairies in Detroit. In addition to providing transportation of produce to market and workers to their jobs, the DUR provided transportation for students to school, family outings to the lakes to the north, and shopping and entertainment in Detroit and Pontiac. Train service ended in 1927 due to competition with Henry Ford's Model T and poor service within the city of Detroit.

In 1936 Kris Port, a 140 acre airport, was built on the west side of Orchard Lake just south of 13 Mile. Developed by Chris Kristiansen, Kris Port had two 2,000 ft runways and became a busy place. In 1949, the local Ground Observer Corps thought that Kris Port would be an ideal place for a lookout during the Cold War. They built an observation shelter that volunteers manned around the clock. The small observation tower can still be seen from Orchard Lake Road. (Fear of attack from the Soviet Union was strong from the late 40's through the mid

1960's. There was a Nike anti-aircraft missile installation at 11 Mile and Franklin. Air raid drills were held in the local schools, bomb shelters were established in major buildings, and a few homeowners built bomb shelters in their homes and yards, including one in Holly Hill Farms. Fortunately, no enemy aircraft was ever sighted in the area, although one of the first residents on Holly Hill Farms spotted his future home while flying out of Kris Port.)

The second wave of development of Farmington would begin one hundred and 25 years after Nathan Power settled at 11 Mile and Power. In the late 1940s, millions of GIs returning from WWII were marrying, starting families, and looking for new homes. "Home alive in 45' and married in 46'." Subdivisions such as Kendallwood, Bel Aire, Westmont (Woodcreek Farms), and Oaklands replaced farms and the country estates of Detroit businessmen.

There to witness this change were Al and Mary Jean. Al was born in Bay City in 1906 and bought land on the east side of Rollcrest at 12 Mile in what then was known as Muer estates in 1935. Originally a butcher, he opened a feed store on the SE corner of 12 Mile and Orchard Lake in 1945. In addition to animal feed that the Jean family would purchase during trips to Toledo, the store sold horsemeat, chicks, and small tools. Local homemakers would recycle the feedbags into curtains and other household articles. The store also served as the local animal rescue shelter for cats and dogs. With the rapid urbanization of the area, Al closed his feed store and, in 1953, opened Jeans Hardware on the corner of Rollcrest and 12 Mile.

Al and Mary had 4 children – Al Jr, Mary, Joe and Pat. Pat grew up on Rollcrest about the time that Holly Hill Farms was being developed in the mid 1950's. She recalls that the land across the 12 Mile and the current site of Harrison High School was a large horse farm, the land across Orchard Lake from airport was a goat farm, and that site of Holly Hill Farms was a swamp. Pat would ride the school bus down dirt Orchard Lake road each day to school at Our Lady of

Sorrows on Power and Shiawassee roads. In addition to the hores, chickens, turkeys, and pigs that the family raised on Rollcrest, Pat had her own cow and calf that was pastured on the NE corner of 14 Mile and Farmington.

The whole family worked at the store. Pat learned to replace windows and carry out the bags of salt, although her mother didn't think it was very ladylike. In her free time, Pat would ride the bus from 12 Mile and Orchard Lake to Pontiac to shop, watch movies at the Civic and hangout at Greens Hamburgers (10 Mile and Orchard Lake), the "Cup and Pup" at Northwestern and 14 Mile and, of course, Gravlins. The fruit and hamburger stand owned by Joe and Doris Gravlin on the NE corner of 13 Mile and Northwestern was a popular spot until it was torn down in the 1985. Charles Gravlin bought the farm of William and Julia Davis which crossed 13 Mile in 1906. Built in the late 1920's, Northwestern Highway cut through their property giving the Gravlin's the perfect location for their farm stand. Fred's Bar on the NW corner of 12 Mile and Middlebelt, would become Oba's before being torn down and replaced by Ginopolis in the 1970's.

Al and Mary provided each of their children with lots along Rollcrest as homesites to raise their 16 grandchildren. Al Sr retired to a cottage on Torch Lake in 1967 and passed away in 1972. Al Jr ran the gas station located next door and later would help run the hardware. Al retired to Florida in 1995 leaving Pat to run the family business which still continues to serve the residents of Holly Hill Farms.

In 1955, the year that Holly Hill Farms Subdivision was recorded with the Oakland County clerk, Farmington Township was well into its transition from a rural area to a suburb of Detroit. Residents were intent on keeping the area mainly residential with top-notch schools and were happy to see that major industries preferred moving into Livonia to the south. Township population was 15,700; over ½ the land had been subdivided into residential lots and only 10% of the land was still under cultivation. Gentlemen farmers, commercial nurseries, orchards and small dairy farms were all that remained from the

township's agricultural history. Around ½ of the roads had been paved. There were 5,284 students, over 1/3 the total population, enrolled in the Farmington School District.

4. Building a Neighborhood

Wolfe-Gilchrist, Inc of Birmingham, Michigan, were the original developers of Holly Hill Farms. On December 15, 1952, Ruby Cogsdill and Julius Rosenberg, who owned the two parcels of land that would become Holly Hill Farms, sold the the property to Leonard H. Wolf and Keith Gilchrist under a land contract. (Is this Ruby Cogsdill related to Clark Cogsdill who purchased and settled the land in 1825?) The first subdivision of this 89-acre plot was recorded on Sept 19, 1955 and covered lots 1-68 that were located along Sugarspring, Highmeadow, Wellington, and Pond Ridge. The developers built model a model of the Techbuilt home on Lot 6 on Wellington. Lots were priced from \$2,880 and homes from \$19,000 which was a little upscale for the time. The original sales brochure described Holly Hill Farms as “a unique community of contemporary homes” in a “woodland setting, endowed by nature with the peaceful charm of tree crested hills, sunny meadows,, rippling brooks, and clear spring fed Holly Lake, (that) affords an enchanting choice of either a sweeping vista or a cloistered ravine for the location of that “home of your dreams”.

The home designs were truly innovative and received national attention. The Techbuilt split entry home, designed Carl Koch & Associates, won the First Award AIA in 1954 and was featured in *Parents Magazine* and the Techbuilt home on Lot 29 was shown in *Better Homes and Gardens*. The ranch on lot 7, designed by Architect Joseph Cyr of Dearborn, MI, was also featured in *Better Homes and Garders*” in an article entitled “What a 1957 Home Should Be“.

Marie and Bud Kaufman, their three children - Tom, Paula, and Joan – and dog Tim were the first to purchase land (Lot 41 on Sugarspring) and move to Holly

Hill Farms. Bud was an artist (photography, pastels, acrylic and watercolors) and a builder as well who added a garage, extra room and photo dark room to the home. He was also an executive designer at Ford and would bring home new and exotic cars – Continental Mark I's, 407 and 427 Fords, AC Cobras, Lamborghini's– much to the delight of his son and neighbors. Both Marie and Bud were very involved in the neighborhood and homeowners association. Tim would later serve our country in the War in Viet Nam.

Bill and Trudy Dinwiddie were the second to purchase a lot in the new subdivision. The couple selected lot 65 on Highmeadow before the roads were in because of its spectacular view of the pond located across the road. Bill and Trudy reasoned that they could enjoy the pond without any of the potential problems and costs of owning pond land. Their home, one of the Techbuilt houses, was completed in 1956, the house and lot costing a total of \$19,000. Trudy and Bill's three children were born and raised in Holly Hill Farms and Bill would be association president twice and lead the subdivision through the difficult issues that confronted the group in the early 60's. Bill and Trudy did know how to have a good time - the couple would become famous in the sub for their New Years Day split pea soup and whiskey sour party. The Kaufman's, Dinwiddie's and other first residents had a great vision of what the area could become since the lots at that time were mostly barren and treeless. The ponds were only lines on the plat map and were referred to as the "sugar bowl". Public utilities were limited so the homes had wells and septic tanks and were heated with oil. But the subdivision represented the American Dream, and many of these first owners were journalists, architects, broadcasters, advertising executives, automotive designers, and artists.

A business recession struck the US in 1957, and when the US economy stalled, the auto industry in Detroit went into depression. Home sales slowed, taking the original developers Wolfe-Gilchrist into bankruptcy. Development of the subdivision continued in the 1960's by Barton Development/Cement Co, Holly

Hill Farms Building Co, and Rosedale Park Realty and Dolan Thompson. By 1962, all of the area had been subdivided and there were 81 families living in the 83 houses that had been built. There were 56 empty lots of which 19 were owned by individuals, 36 by Dolan Thompson and the Association owned Lot 28. A ranch style home was worth about \$19,000. It would be another 15 years before house building would be completed in Holly Hill Farms.

4. Starting Traditions

Like the homes of many of the young families, the subdivision was a busy place in those first years. On June 6, 1958 the papers for the Holly Hill Homeowners Association were filled with the state. Over the years, there were many activities sponsored by the homeowners association: ice skating parties on the ponds, Easter egg hunts, dinner dances, girl and boy scout troops, bowling leagues, a men's recreation program, Halloween parties, pot luck and progressive dinners, wine and cheese parties, and the 4th of July picnic. The dinner dances were a big affair. The first was held in 1962 at the Farmington VFW hall where guests had to bring their own drinks. Subsequent dances were held at the Glen Oaks Country Club on 13 Mile and the Centaur Club on Drake. Gene and Thelma Dawber organized the theme and matching decorations for many of these events.

The 4th of July picnic was the major event of the year with 364 people attending the event in 1965. One of the streets would be blocked off for the many events that including bike parades, kids games, music and square dancing, and lots of food and drink. The grand finale was fireworks at the schoolyard on Highmeadow. Several of the neighbors were formally trained in launching the rockets and folks from all around would come to watch the show. In 1973 no adults volunteered to organize the picnic and the neighborhood teenagers stepped forward to take on the task. By the late 1970's attendance on the 4th of

July waned so the event was restructured as the Holly Hill Farms Hoedown and later as a summer picnic that has continued to the present day.

Halloween was the other major event for kids in the area. Joan Kaufman recalls that everyone in the neighborhood participated. All the kids were dressed in costumes making the rounds with pillowcases hoping to fill them with candy. Many parents had parties with hot cider and dunking for apples. Some decorated their yard or garage. Best of all was the Birmingham's house on Pond Ridge where a giant witch hung from the telephone pole stirring a smoking black caldron. The witch was wired for sound so that the Birmingham's could make the witch crackle and scream when the trick or treaters approached. The Birmingham's had the best candy for those who were brave enough to make it to the front door. Unfortunately, the "razor blade in the apple" scare in 1967 drastically changed the nature of Halloween across the US. Afterwards, the kids would attend a party at the Ozker's home on Summerwood rather than the door-to-door trick or treating of the past.

The kids found lots of other things to do. They would explore "The Streams" (Pebble Creek between 13 Mile and Middlebelt), ride their sleds down Pond Ridge and across the lake, play hockey on the ponds, build forts with scrap lumber on the empty lots, swim and build rafts on the ponds, and playing basketball including "pig" or was it "horse"? In 1961, about 25 children and their parents traveled to Jack Minor's bird sanctuary in Ontario and saw the thousands of Canada geese rested during their on their migration south. That same year 42 kids went to the Down's Chick Hatchery where the manager became concerned that the chicks would not survive the crush-loving care of the children. The kids knew how to work too – over the years, the developers and homeowners hired teenagers to maintain and mow lawns and the entrance markers and print and deliver the newsletter. Armen Korkigian was one of the first and Jeff Simonton was one of the last of a long string of paperboys in the sub.

6. Taking Care of Business

In addition to the social events, the association was busy with improving the neighborhood. They worked on petitions for city sewers (installed in 1965), city water, (1966) and paved streets (finished in 1972). The entrance markers were installed in 1962 (and rebuilt in 1972 and 2000). The subdivision first contracted snow plowing for the subdivision in 1967, a service that is still provided to residents today. But there were problems too: road drainage, maintenance of the ditches, chloriding, oiling and graveling the roads, loose dogs, vandalism and Devil's Night, mosquito and inchworm infestations, trash on empty lots, and speeding on the Higmeadow curve were some of the issues to be dealt with.

Some of the issues were a little more complex. The concept of a mandatory maintenance fee was a little unusual in 1957 and the association struggled on a way to collect the fee in a fair and equitable way. It was finally decided that year invoices would be sent to each lot owner and that liens would be placed on the properties that did not pay. The original concept of the subdivision was threatened when subsequent builders and developers ignored the commitment that all homes in the subdivision would be of contemporary design. The association took them all to court and won an agreement in 1960 dictating where builders must construct contemporary homes and restricting the construction of colonials to Subdivision #5 on Woodbrook. In 1961, the association was given full authority over the Architectural Control Committee that was charged with approving plans before homes could be built. There would be more issues with home designs in the future, but now the association had more control over the style and appearance of the buildings.

The association has had nearly as many committees as Congress. There was the welcoming committee (chaired by Vera Paul for many years), dog and wild life (chaired by Virgil Westdale) committees, architectural control, beautification and maintenance committees, picnic, audit, newsletter and last, but not least, 50th anniversary and reunion committees.

Things were progressing in the surrounding areas as well. Families flooded into the area with the opening of the Southfield, John Lodge and I696 (Walter Ruther) freeways in the early 1960's that provided nonstop access to Farmington from Detroit and Dearborn. Children from the neighborhood originally attended Bond Elementary, O.E Dunkel Jr High and Farmington High but these schools were quickly overloaded forcing half-day classes in some situations. Construction of Highmeadow Elementary in 1963 and Harrison High School in 1970 relieved some of the pressure on classrooms. The population of the township skyrocketed, so, to preempt annexation by the city of Farmington, the township voted to become the City of Farmington Hills in July 1973.

7. The Ponds

The ponds have always been a unique aspect of Holly Hill Farms and have been the subject of a few controversies as well. The ponds were originally a low, swampy area until they were dredged and the dams built around 1956. In July, 1957, Virgil and his wildlife committee planted 600 blugill and 600 large mouth bass fingerlings in the two ponds. Despite the runoff that would fill the upper pond with mud and DDT (used at the time to control Dutch Elm disease), the fish did survive and fishing on the ponds became a popular past time. There were problems early on with weed and algae growth and low water levels. And there were issues with access and usage as well. This brings us to the story of Lot 28.

In 1956, Wolfe-Gilchrist provided owners on non-lake lots with an easement to make legal use of lot 28, which is located on the upper pond. The lot was used for Boy Scout meetings and folks also used the lot to launch small boats and swim. The easement ended in 1961 and the developers failed to transfer ownership of the lot to the association as promised. The first of several lawsuits ensued, and in 1960 the lot was transferred to the homeowners. The association began plans to build an amphitheater for story telling and planting.

There were some real problems with this proposal. First, the lot did not meet the size requirement for recreational areas as specified in the township zoning ordinance and second, the covenants on the property limited usage to residence purpose only. The pond lot owners filed a lawsuit against the association and won an injunction on June 27, 1961 that prohibited use of the lot and access to the pond. The association now owned a lot they could not use but they were still required to pay the property tax on the land. In October 1966 the association agreed to sell the lot and in April 1967 it was sold for \$10,525. But wait, the story does not end there. Since the lot was originally intended for the use of non-lake lot owners, did the money really belong to them? After another consultation with the lawyers, it was decided that the funds could be spent in any manner consistent with the bylaws. The funds were eventually used to pay for the renovation of the entrance markers in 1972.

The last half of the 1970's saw a slow but consistent change in Holly Hill Farms. The problems that challenged the first owners had largely been solved. Even minor controversies were now few and far between. Homes had been built on all of the lots. The crush of baby boomer kids were graduating from high school and getting on with their lives as young adults, taking with them the glue that held the neighborhood tightly together. Many of the first owners sold their houses. More mothers were joining their husbands in careers that took them away from home each day. Single men and women began to replace couples as property owners in the subdivision. The school population plummeted in the early 1980's and Highmeadow Elementary was sold in 1982 and became Lutheran High School West. The area entered into a quiet time that, in some respects, continues to this day.

8. Farmington Hills – A Mature City

In most every way, Farmington Hills has become the community that residents envisioned 50 years ago. The city is mostly residential, with a limited amount of commercial and business development. The city is nearly fully developed with only a small amount of commercial land still available for building. There are over 22,000 owner occupied housing units and about 11,000 renter occupied units. With 78,803 residents in 2005, population has increased by 5 times over the past 50 years. Farmington Hills is the second largest city in Oakland County behind Troy. Current population is down about 4% from the 82,111 residents who lived here in 2000 when Farmington Hills was the largest city in the county. 12,256 students attend the Farmington Schools and the district is ranked as one of the best in the state. Just over 50% of the adult population is married. In 2000, the median family income was \$88,138 and the per capita income was \$36,134. The area is very diverse – 76% of the residents are white, 12.2% are Black/ African American and 10.3% are Asian. Hidden in these numbers are the large numbers of people from the Middle East who live here as well. About 100 different languages or dialects are spoken in the city and 18.5% of the families speak a language different than English in the home.

9. Holly Hill Farms Today

Like the city, Holly Hill Farms has become the community the Leonard Wolfe, Keith Gilchrist and Joseph Cry envisioned back in 1956. It is an area of beautiful and unique homes carefully positioned on lots with lovely trees and plantings. Residents reflect the composition of the city making the subdivision a diverse mixture of cultures and backgrounds. Young couples are moving into the neighborhood rekindling the spirit prevalent 50 years ago. The number of children is increasing with 39 school age children now living here. The school district bought back Highmeadow Elementary and it is now a national exemplary school attracting students from all over the city. Halloween is back too and,

although the numbers are down, we have treat or treaters out with their pillowcases once again. Bill Dinwiddie continues to live in his home on Highmeadow and has lived here longer than any of resident. The area is full of wildlife, with squirrels, woodchucks, birds, skunks, raccoons, opossum and deer.

The once similar homes have evolved in their own unique and special way as owners have added additions and made modifications to their properties. Homes are now valued between \$250,000 and \$400,000. The directory shows that 91 of the homes are owned by couples, 45 by singles and the remaining two are group homes. Several of the homes have recently undergone extensive reconstruction.

The ponds are the jewels that provide a highlight to area. The issues surrounding lot 28 are now a dim memory and the “pondies” continue to welcome the neighborhood for the annual ice skating party (that is, when we have ice). Beginning in 2002, several of the neighbors stepped forward to lead the renovation of the ponds – Ric Olenzek took on rebuilding of the dam and placement of stones along the embankment and shore. Harold Larsen organized the group in funding weed and algae control, a well to supplement the levels of the upper pond and restocking of the fish. Russ Russinoff arranged for the control of the Canada geese (by having them captured and shipped off to Iowa) and designed the new bridge. Herons, cranes, ducks and a “limited” number of geese now populate the ponds. And what happened to lot 28? Well, the Gilfix’s have built a beautiful garden that provides a great view of the pond as you pass by on Sugarspring.

We stand on the shoulders of giants, and we all thank the many men and women whose vision, fortitude and just plain hard work have made Holly Hill Farms a delightful place to live.

10. Bibliography

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