

Jerome Bulletin

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March 1989

Happy 50th Birthday Jerome!

The Village of Jerome marks a very special date this month. It was 50 years ago that the Village of Jerome was incorporated. The Bulletin has had several requests to print the history of Jerome and since we have many new residents in the village, we thought this might be the appropriate time to tell how our village came about.

Some of our residents may remember when Jerome wasn't Jerome at all. It was originally part of an extensive and prosperous farm owned by Jerome A. Leland. The residence of the Leland Family was located at 2116 Willemore and is still standing. The farm was bounded on the north by Ash St., on the south by Wabash Ave., on the east by MacArthur Blvd. and on the west by Chatham Road. In 1928, Mr. Leland sold 70 acres to Trentman Company Realtors, national real estate subdividers in Wichita, Kansas. They subdivided the territory into lots and streets for residential use and the subdivision was called Alta Sita Gardens. They sold lots from a tent and the lots ranged in price from \$99.00 to \$294.00, \$1.00 down and 50 cents a week with no taxes For a year!

In the original plat, Jerome, Vernon and the south side of Reed went From Fillmore to Corbin. The north side of Reed, Homewood, Glenn and Iles went from Fillmore to five lots west of Leonard St. The courts east of Fillmore were not included in the original plat. Roads were passable only in dry weather and many times folks left their cars on the highway and walked home. Donations were taken door to door for an occasional load of cinders.

In 1938, practically all of the wells in the village had gone dry, so residents got together evenings to discuss the possibility of getting city water. To receive water, the subdivision had to be incorporated, and there had to be 150 signers who would agree to pay \$1.50 per month for one year.

On March 18, 1939, the subdivision became the Village of Jerome and the population numbered 425. The first village

board consisted of President W. R. Shaffner; Trustees Frank Larson, Edward Krueger, R. W. Bennett, Oliver Turner, William Barron and George Hartshorn and Clerk Ella Sokolis. They held the first meeting in the home of Oliver Turner, 1537 Reed, on May 16, 1939. The Board continued meeting in members homes until November 1943, when the first village hall was built by volunteers.

On June 1, 1939, a contract for water From the City of Springfield was approved. In 1941, WPA workers began construction of Jerome's water distribution system. The village sold water revenue bonds to pay for this system. We have purchased water from Springfield since that time.

Gradually there became a need for ordinances to govern and regulate zoning, health and property protection, new building construction, liquor sales, weed control, etc. Cows, horses, pigs and chickens began to disappear. To provide for better roads, a wheel tax of \$5.00 per vehicle was passed on August 2, 1945, and continued until October 1948 when it was repealed.

In 1946, Jerome honored its war veterans with a monument which still stands in Front of the Municipal Building. Returning veterans were given special permission to erect small garage type houses in accordance with building codes.

The 1950 Census listed a population of 689 people in Jerome, a 62.5% increase over 1940, 1,666 persons by 1960, a 141% increase over 1950! The 1980 Census listed the population of Jerome at 1,374. A total of 285 residential building permits were issued between 1950 and 1962 with peak residential building occurring during 1954 and 1955 when 97 building permits were approved for new single-family residences. In 1956, the number of building permits issued declined sharply and continued at a steady low level. The population was 1,705 at that time. One reason for the slow down of growth in Jerome was the fact that there was little or no vacant land available for residential building,

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-HISTORY OF JEROME CON'T-

Today there are only seven vacant lots remaining in the village.

In 1960, the Census of Housing showed 527 housing units in the village; 468 of which were owner occupied, 41 renter occupied and 18 units being vacant. The 1960 Census also indicated the value of structures in Jerome averaged higher than Springfield and Sangamon County but not neighboring Leland Grove.

In 1956, Jerome began to collect one-half per cent retail sales tax. This sales tax has since become an important source of revenue. Before 1956, the total average annual revenues for the village was \$19,000. In 1956, Jerome's income was \$27,750, in 1952, it was \$53,290, and fiscal year 1988 showed a revenue of \$514,423.

In March 1957, the Village Board approved final plans for the construction of the Municipal Water Department Building (now the Jerome Municipal Building). The Board met in the new building for the first time in July 1957.

In February 1965, the Board received bids for the construction of the Jerome Civic Center which is attached to the Municipal Building. Formal dedication of the Civic Center was held June 16, 1966. A flag donated to the village by Congressman, Paul Finley was one which had previously flown over the Nation's Capitol. Speaker of the day was Judge William Chamberlain, a former Jerome resident. A bronze plaque bearing the names of those persons holding office at the time the Civic Center was planned and construction started, was placed in the entry way of the Civic Center.

The Municipal Garage was built in 1971 and 1980, the salt bin for storage of road salt was built at the rear of the Garage. In February 1984, the Board approved the purchase of property located directly behind the Municipal Complex for a parking lot. Two houses on the property were demolished in January 1985 and the lot has now been black topped for convenience of persons using the Civic Center and Municipal Building. We in Jerome are proud of our Municipal Complex of buildings and their value, excluding land, is \$225,000.

Some of the programs we are fortunate enough to have are: 24-hour police protection, snow removal, clean up program, mosquito spraying, asphalt overlay of our 5.64 miles of streets and the storm sewer program. All of these programs have been provided without special assessment to our village residents.

Property owners in Jerome are now paying 37 1/2 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation. Of that, 25 cents goes to the Jerome Corporation, 5 cents goes for our street lights and 7 1/2 cents goes for our police protection. We now have four full-time and five part-time police officers, three full-time and one part-time maintenance employees and one full-time and one part-time water department employees.

Jerome has come a long way from those first few families who had the courage to incorporate and put themselves in debt to build a water distribution system. We are fortunate to have some of our pioneers with us today. I hope all of you will agree that this Village is a fine place to live, to raise a family, and to spend our retirement years.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY VILLAGE OF JEROME AND
MAY YOU HAVE MANY MORE! '

Joan Olinger, Clerk

(Information for this article was taken from articles written by former Clerk's Mary Ellen Jennings and Jean Berg Simhauser, permanent minutes of the Village and the Comprehensive Plan, 1963).

THE VILLAGE OF JEROME BOARD OF TRUSTEES

CORDIALLY INVITES YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

TO CELEBRATE THE 50th BIRTHDAY OF

THE VILLAGE OF JEROME

OPEN HOUSE

SUNDAY, MARCH 19, 1989

200 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

JEROME CIVIC CENTER
2901 LEONARD STREET
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

REFRESHMENTS