

Time traces

by Jim Ingram

(First in a series on Lake Orion in the 1960s)

Growth was the name of the game for Orion Township in the 1960s.

Howard T. Keating Jr. acquired the 3,200 acre former Scripps Estate and planned to build a new town there. It would be patterned after such new towns as Reston, Virginia and Irvine Ranch in Orange County, California.

Aptly enough, called Keatington, it would include residential and recreational complexes centered about two lakes on the property, a golf course, marina and perhaps an amusement park similar to Disneyland.

Keatington would be a true town. It would have a downtown with office buildings and stores. It would have an industrial park, covering 153 acres and rigidly restricted so that it would remain attractive.

Groundbreaking ceremonies for Keatington were held in October 1964 with 50 state, county and local officials attending.

The first housing models in the Keatington Subdivision were under construction on Baldwin Road in 1965. In October 1966, Keatington's first family moved into their new home. Leonard and Violet Pallas and their four children moved from Huntington Woods into a four bedroom colonial facing Lake Voorheis.

The Orion Township Planning Commission issued a Master Plan for the township in 1965.

The 3,000 acre New Town was expected to have a population of 30,000 by 1980. If the rest of the township grew as expected from its present figure of 12,000, a total population for the entire township would be about 60,000 by the same year.

This was not to be. In the 1960s, there was still considerable land in southern Oakland County available for residential and commercial development.

Keatington New Town didn't develop, but a

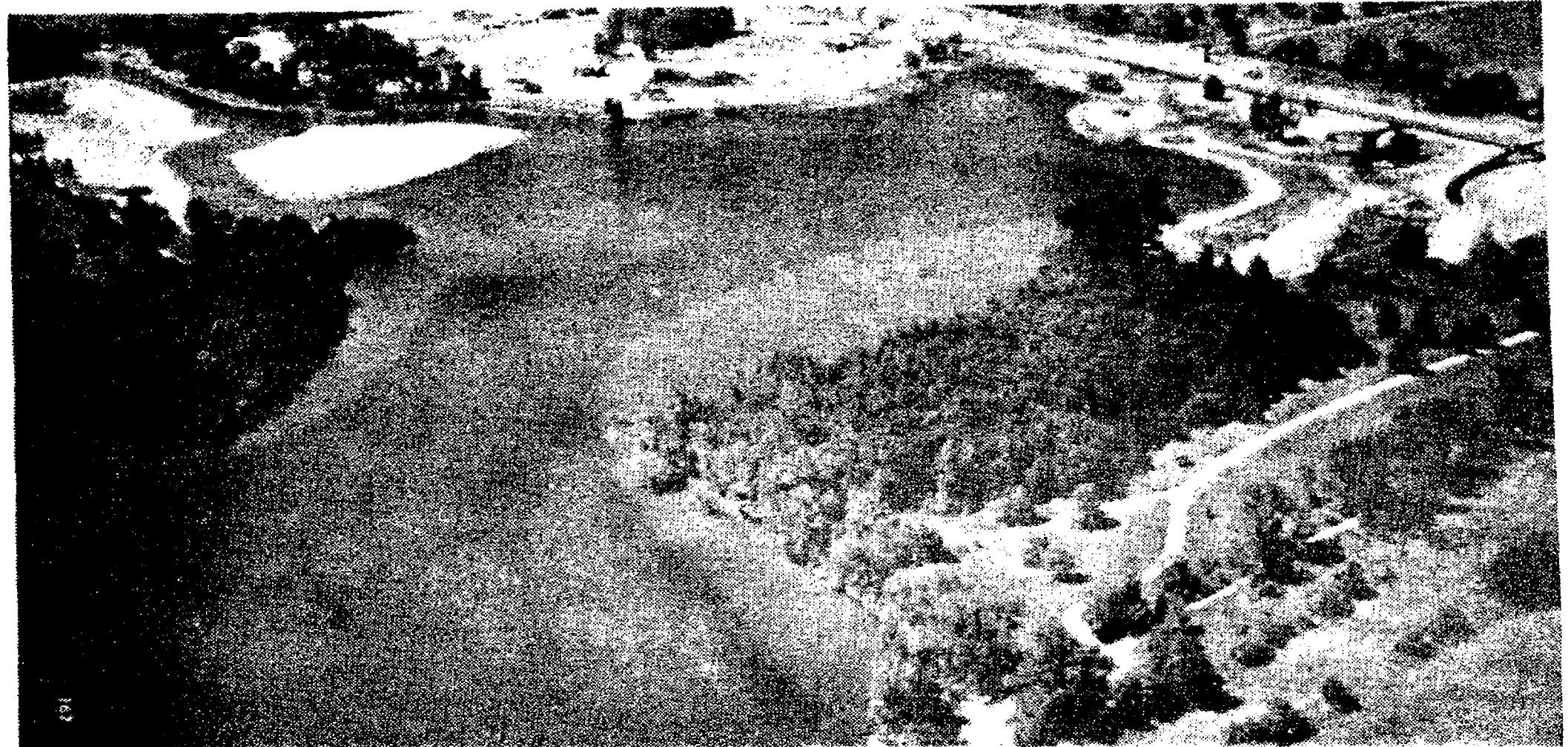


Photo taken from the 1968 Dragon Yearbook.

sizable Keatington Subdivision did grow up off Baldwin and Waldon Road around Lake Voorheis.

Keating sold over 2,000 acres to Chrysler Realty in 1968. Later the state of Michigan would acquire this property as a result of their effort to assist the financially strapped Chrysler Corporation.

The property east of Joslyn Road to M-24 was attached to Bald Mountain Recreation Area. A smaller portion obtained by Orion Township is now the site of the township hall and park.

A portion of the property is now part of the Oakland County Park system, Orion Oaks Park. The citizens of Orion Township can certainly feel gratified by this turn of events. The amount of

township acreage in parks is the only thing that provides any semblance of a semi-rural atmosphere for Orion.

One part of Keatington that did materialize was Antique Village. It developed in the barns and tenant houses of the former Scripps Estate, Wildwood Farms. These were converted in 1967 to various specialty shops in a charming old village atmosphere.

Some of the ones I recall were Uncle Bob's General Store, Auld Lang Syne Bakery, various antique and craft shops and of course Ben Hazelton's "Ben's Bull Pen" (now Haymakers).

Diamond Dave started his jewelry store in this location. Some of the barns and cottages are today part of Canterbury Village.