Variety of Styles and Prices of Mountain Lakes Homes Secret of Successful Progress

For nearly three years, or since shortly after the war started in Europe, suburban real estate men have been using the term "quiet" when discussing affairs in their own business. In one section a developer would say that the cost of living had mounted so high that people had no money with which to buy homes or home sites. In another place a home builder would say that building costs had mounted so high that people could not afford to pay for residences in the country, and in still another part of the great suburban district a broker would voice with regret the fact that people were going in so extensively for automobiles that they had neither the time nor inclination to consider buying homes. For one reason or another the last three years have been pretty lean ones for suburban home producers generally. Business has not been good, but owners and brokers are convinced that it will be good again as soon as people all over this part of the country realize that they can buy homes now for less than they probably will ever be able to buy them hereafter.

But one concern has never complained. Unlike the great majority of companies, Mountain Lakes, Inc., has gone merrily along with its development and upbuilding of its great tract in the mountain foothills of New Jersey, putting up as many houses every year as labor and material would permit and disposing of them almost as fast as they were completed. For three years the "Business Up to Capacity" sign has been out, and while all the real estate world wondered Mountain Lakes has been growing both in size and prestige until to-day the mention of suburban homes brings to mind Mountain Lakes.

"How does he do it?" developers and brokers ask. They refer to H. J. Hapgood, the master mind of the great home community. "He is a remarkable person to have built up such a place in times such as we have had. What is the great secret of his success?"

To all of which Mr. Hapgood replies, "Give the people the kind of homes they want at prices they can afford to pay and they will do business with you." And it is on that basis that Mr. Hapgood has claimed more than 1,000 acres of what was a most beautiful wilderness for as attractive a home district as is to be found within an hour's ride of New York.

The average land developer when he starts out to make his fortune takes over a well located property on a good railroad line and reasonably near to a large community, puts in a few surface and subsurface improvements, builds a few houses, and then considers his property on the map. One of his principal assets as a rule is a section already well known to a great part of the population among whom he expects to do business. But the problem at Mountain Lakes was not so easily solved. It was a good deal like developing 1,000 acres in the heart of the Adirondacks, except that Mountain Lakes had a good railroad to serve it and the great metropolis within an hour's ride to supply people for the houses after they were built.

In such a setting one does not expect to find a development of the ordinary type, and one does not find such a development. There is nothing formal or artificial about the big residential park, nothing in the way of embellishment, for, as the land stood, with its great wooded hills interspersed with clear, shining lakes, it had everything needed to make it a most attractive spot for the homes of those who really wanted country life.

This year a new step was undertaken in the development of Mountain Lakes, and its success is one of the remarkable features of this notable place. After having spent nearly four years building moderate priced homes, that is dwellings ranging in price from about $7,500 to about $20,000, Mr. Hapgood decided that the time had arrived for launching his greatest venture, the building of good sized estates.

For this development a site was selected on one of the highest hills in that part of New Jersey, from which wonderful views are to be had for many miles in every direction. Some of the largest and most attractive houses erected by any development company in this part of the country were built, houses which with their land sell for as much as $50,000. And they are being sold almost as fast as they can be put up. It was a bold venture to put into this group the many thousands of dollars it required, but its success has been so great that from now on the building of such estates probably will be one of the principal features of the further upbuilding of the community.

Not the smallest factor in the success of Mountain Lakes is a good supply of houses always on hand ready to be occupied. Mr. Hapgood, instead of waiting for prospective buyers to order houses built, erects them in advance of demand. Any one really desirous of buying always can be accommodated. This works out to the benefit of Mountain Lakes in more ways than one. In the last year or two it has meant a considerable saving in cost for home buyers. On this point R. L. Kilby, sales manager of Mountain Lakes, gave some interesting facts a few days ago.

"Labor," he said, "has advanced in cost just about 100 per cent. during the last year and materials have advanced about 50 per cent. That means that houses built last spring cost just about one-half what the same style houses will cost to build next year. The principal result of these high prices will be the almost total stopping of suburban home construction and an increase in price of dwellings already erected. In my travels about the country I have been impressed by the few houses in the market. Nearly every place is sold out and there is little prospect of new construction.

"We at Mountain Lakes were fortunate in having planned a great number of houses this year and in having obtained our materials. It means that while many developments are tied up for lack of properties to sell, we are still able to do a good business on old prices because we have the goods."

Mr. Kilby added that no matter where a person plans to locate, now is the time to buy his home in the country. To wait until spring means that the prospective buyer will be thrown into competition with many other home seekers, who will be forced into the suburbs because they will not be able to find homes in the city. He said that prices are lower to-day than they ever will be again, and that a suburban home bought at present prices is as fine an investment as a man can get for an equal amount of money."

NORTH SHORE RESIDENTS BEHIND BIG PUSH FOR RAPID TRANSIT

Intimation That Subway System and Railroad Are Not to Be Connected Brought Out Whole Section in Mighty Protest

Residents of the Third ward of Queens to the number of nearly four hundred have declared war on delay and pledged themselves to stand behind a committee of ten whose duty it will be to bring about a speedy resumption of negotiations and hasten a final agreement between the Interborough Rapid Transit Company, the Long Island Railroad Company and the city for the connection, leasing and operation of an extension of the subway system from Corona to Whitestone and Little Neck. George J. Ryan, president of the Chamber of Commerce of the Borough of Queens, who presided at a meeting held at League Hall, Flushing, Thursday night, was given the power to appoint the committee by the unanimous consent of those present.

This action was taken as the result of a notice sent to the Public Service Commission by James L. Quackenbush, general attorney for the Interborough Rapid Transit Company, stating that it could not operate the extension should the commission and Long Island Railroad come to an agreement for a lease of the trackage rights. This announcement was interpreted to mean a complete breaking off of negotiations. The men and women who came to the meeting—there were a dozen or more women in the gallery, indicating how deeply interested the populace is in the question—were in a defiant mood. They felt that Flushing and the North Shore were being discriminated against and were ready to voice their sentiments in an unmistakable tone.

Two of the speakers, however, eased the vindictive feeling and relieved the situation when they announced that in conversation with Mr. Quackenbush, they had learned that the Interborough had not intended to terminate the negotiations, but merely wanted the city and railroad company to give it more careful consideration before the final agreement was signed. Influences of the war and the present financial and labor situation were advanced as the reason for the action of the Interborough. It was explained that the link between the Corona line and Long Island Railroad was not only the logical but the most direct and cheapest solution of giving the North Shore the transit which it is justly demanding and deserved.

Public Service Commissioner Travis H. Whitney in the course of his remarks stated that the commission recognized the need of additional transit in Flushing and that it has instructed its engineers to go ahead with plans for an extension of the Corona line to Main street, Flushing. He explained that while the commission could not legally compel the Interborough to operate over trackage leased by the city, it could under the dual contracts compel it to operate over a city built extension. If the first section is built to Main street, he said that the second section would follow as far as Bay Side as soon as money is available. A provision in the contracts provides that as the dual system becomes self-sustaining rapid transit bonds issued to cover these lines could be exempted from the city's debt limit and others issued to cover the cost of further extensions. The hopes of quick relief in this direction were shattered by the assertion that it is now costing the city seven to eight cents for each five cents received from passengers on the Astoria and Corona lines.

These and other facts indicated that the only salvation for quick relief lies in linking the present Corona extension with the Long Island Railroad. Borough President Connolly explained that the Interborough needed storage yards for cars and that as it could not find suitable lands near the present terminus of the line it would have to go to the Flushing meadows for the required space. He argued that the linking of the elevated line with the railroad would afford the quickest means of relief to the company as well as to the residents of Flushing. President Connolly also stated that the difference in the cost of constructing the elevated line to Flushing and the connection between the elevated lines and the railroad tracks meant a big saving to the city if the latter plan is followed. He explained that if bonds to the extent of $1,000,000 were issued it would cost the city $60,000 a year in interest charges each year until taken up, while the estimated deficit in the operation over the railroad tracks is placed at $26,000 and only for one year. He also stated that a greater quantity of material would be needed to construct the extension than the link, and taking the material situation into consideration he argued that the link would require the lesser amount and should be advocated from an economical standpoint.

Clinton T. Roe, who seemed to be full of facts and figures, stated that while the Third ward of Queens had 22,000 acres not a cent had yet been spent for transit in this vast territory, while $80,000,000 had been spent in The Bronx and $60,000,000 in Brooklyn. The Third ward has a population of 60,000 and is steadily growing in spite of the high Long Island Railroad fares. With cheap and quick transit, he argued, it would outgrow any other part of the greater city.

The Third ward pays on assessments of about $80,000,000 and taxes amount to over $1,500,000. If the elevated line is extended to Main street, Flushing, only the adjacent territory will be served with rapid transit and only about 5 per cent. of the residents would be benefited, while the whole Third ward would be called upon to help pay the deficit. He argued that the Third ward pays from 40 to 80 cents to get into the heart of the city to-day, while not another section pays more than five cents. The Third ward, he explained, offered to do more than any other section of the city. The original estimate showed that there would be a deficit if only a five cent fare was charged, and the Third ward agreed by the signatures of 6,000 out of 7,500 voters to pay an additional five cent fare, or in other words to pay its own deficit on its own transit.

The elevated extension, it was explained, would give only limited relief. The link with the railroad would serve a greater territory. Along the Whitestone branch not only Flushing but College Point, Malba, Whitestone and adjacent territory would get transit, while on the Port Washington line Murray Hill, Broadway, Bay Side, Douglaston, Little Neck and adjacent territory could be reached for five or ten cents, as the agreement might provide. Besides many places beyond the city line, such as Great Neck, Manhasset, Plandome and Port Washington would be brought within a cheaper and quicker transportation zone.

The arguments were all in favor of the link and the unanimous vote on the question of appointing a committee indicated that the sentiment on this point was undivided, that the agitation shall be concentrated on getting this link, and that not until all hope fails shall the Third ward accept the alternative of an elevated extension to Flushing.

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