

"Community Pond Dedicated"

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by Jay A. Graybeal

When the Westminster By-pass opened in 1954, Gov. Theodore McKeldin participated in the dedication ceremony. He predicted that the new highway would relieve congestion on Main Street and attract business development along the new road. Gov. McKeldin returned a year later to deliver some remarks at the dedication of the Community Pond. His speech is preserved in the Historical Society's manuscript collection:

"Cooperation is the very heart of any program for the benefit of the people of a State or of a community.

Governmental efforts to improve conditions in a given field, lacking the support and cooperation of a substantial segment of the citizenry would be, at best, paternalism--at worst, dictatorship.

By the same token efforts initiated by groups of people in a good cause for the recognized benefit of the people in general, deserve and should have the proper support and cooperation of government.

I am happy to report on this occasion that there has been excellent cooperation between the people in communities and those in the agencies of government on such projects as this which we are dedicating here.

The Kiwanis Club of Westminster is due high praise for sponsoring this Community fish pond and roadside picnic area.

The people of this area are to be commended for the support they have given it.

The fish pond projects, which are proving popular in various areas of the State, originated in the planning of the State Game and Inland Fish Commission and the State Roads Commission.

But wherever one was proposed, the people of the community were consulted, and it was with full community approval and cooperation that they were installed.

Now the communities and their organizations are, in many instances, making the original proposals.

Likewise, picnic areas have been installed at the suggestion or with the approval of the people in the area of location.

Among the combined pond and picnic areas, now installed, under construction or in the planning stage are those at Rising Sun, at Elkton, at Wye Milles, at Kennedyville, Sharpsburg, Brunswick and Hughesville.

Wayside picnic areas, without ponds, are installed throughout the State. Since the first was installed early in my Administration, we have constructed some 200 of them, with facilities for well over 5,000 picnickers at a time. They are very popular, both with Maryland citizens and with tourists. We intend to keep building them.

Where it is feasible, small streams will be impounded and the resultant streams stocked with fish.

The increase in travel, the expansion of tourist business which we are encouraging, and the rapid growth of our highway system under our 12-year road construction program creates some problems.

One of these is the careless and unthinking lettering of our highways, roadside, picnic areas, parks and other public places with empty containers and other discarded waste and trash.

To combat this, I have appointed a Statewide committee to devise and promote educational campaigns against such costly and unsightly carelessness. Others will be named to this group from time to time as the need is indicated.

Mr. John E. Clark, the chairman, expects to call the first meeting of the big committee in the very near future.

I rate interest in and action for the proper preservation of our open areas high among the functions of government and the concerns of the people.

We are pleased with the increasing mobility of our people and with the rapid growth of our population. They bespeak a state of progress. We are happy to cope with the problems they create.

The tendency is to build and build--houses and apartment buildings--wherever land becomes available. These dwellings are necessary.

But some of us must bear constantly in mind that it is necessary, too, to preserve some areas for recreation--where people can get away from their crowded living quarters--where they can see the sky and hear the running of streams.

I say thanks to the Kiwanis Club of Westminster and the people of Carroll County."

Gov. McKeldin accurately predicted the rise in travel and tourism and the rapid growth of modern highway systems in the post-World War II era. He also predicted that government would be challenged to balance the benefits of growth and development with the preservation of open areas for recreation.

Photo caption: The Westminster Community Pond was dedicated on September 18, 1954. The new facility quickly attracted users of many kinds, including Boy Scout Troop 320 of Manchester pictured in the summer of 1955. Historical Society of Carroll County collection.