



ROYAL OAK Historical Society

OCTOBER 2025 • ROYALOAKHISTORICALSOCIETY.COM



View of the store from Catalpa, with streetcar tracks in foreground, c. 1935.



George W. Frentz (left) stands with several employees in front of the store on Main Street after a snowstorm, around 1949.

FRENTZ & SONS HARDWARE: A ROYAL OAK LEGACY SINCE 1932

BY MICHAEL FRENTZ

Editor's note: For nearly a century, Frentz & Sons Hardware has been an indispensable resource for thousands of residents in the Royal Oak community and beyond, providing tools, paint, supplies, and items for any home DIY fix, plus providing "how-to" advice to customers on how to repair almost anything. In July, the family announced that the hardware store would close. Michael Frentz, one of the co-owners and a longtime board member of the Royal Oak Historical Society, recounts the history of his family's iconic store and its enduring connection to the city. All photographs courtesy of the Frentz family.

IN 1932, DURING the depths of the Great Depression, George Washington Frentz, just 21 years old, arrived in Royal Oak with his father and brother to purchase a row of empty storefronts. That bold decision would anchor the Frentz family in the heart of the city for nearly a century, creating a cornerstone of the community known as Frentz & Sons Hardware.

But the story began even earlier. The Frentz family originally operated a store on Wyoming Street in Detroit — which was opened in 1925 by our grandfather — and called it Frentz Hardware. My dad, George, had worked there since the age of 16. The family had ties to Lmly City, and on their many streetcar rides out from Detroit, they'd transfer in Royal Oak at the Catalpa turnaround. Across the street stood an empty building, a familiar sight they would pass countless times. When that building became available for purchase, my grandfather, my father, and his brother Russ took the leap and brought the business to Royal Oak.

THE BUILDING WAS constructed around the 1910s, and its six empty storefronts were purchased for \$100 for each unit, along with an agreement to pay the back property taxes owed to the city. They used the two northernmost storefronts to house the hardware store and rented out the remaining units to help support the business. It was at that time that the family incorporated the company under the new name, Frentz & Sons Hardware, officially establishing their place in the Royal Oak business landscape. At the time, my grandfather was in his 60s and not doing well. My father, then 21, took over the business.

Continued on Page 4

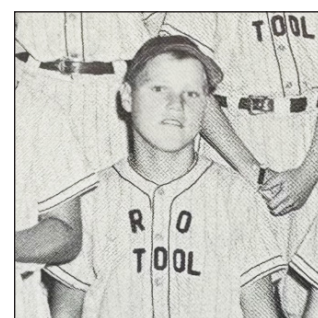
Detroit Tiger Bill Freehan's Early Years in Royal Oak

By Don Callihan

FOR DETROIT TIGERS FANS, 1968 was a landmark year. The Tigers claimed the third World Series title in their 67-year history, and the first since 1945. Catcher Bill Freehan, with a career-high 25 home runs and 84 RBIs, played a key role in helping the Tigers win the American League pennant and the World Series championship. He played his entire 15-year major league career with the Tigers and was an 11-time All-Star and five-time Gold Glove winner.

While many are familiar with Freehan's stellar major league career, few realize he spent his childhood growing up in Royal Oak. William Ashley Freehan was

Continued on Page 8



Bill Freehan was on the Royal Oak Tool and Machine team from age 9 to 12 in the summers of 1951 to 1954.

ROYAL OAK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ANNUAL DINNER
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

See Page 2 for details.

ROYAL OAK
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Historical Museum

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royaloakhistoricalsociety.com

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Hours: Tues., Thurs., Sat., 1–4 p.m.
and by appointment

EXHIBITS

"Residential Genealogy:
Beyond the Walls"
through October 25,
then returning Nov. 24

South Oakland Art Association
Annual Show and Sale
November 1–15

*All photographs, artifacts, and archival
materials are from the collections of the
Royal Oak Historical Society unless noted.*

President's Message

BY TOM TOGGWEILER

GREETINGS TO EVERYONE in Royal Oak and to those who carry our city's history in their hearts. The Historical Society has been busy the last few months with fundraisers and events to help sustain our history preservation mission.

Our annual Car Show in August was well attended, and we are grateful to the owners of more than 100 vintage cars who participated in the event. We were also treated to a visit by the Royal Oak Fire Department's new hook and ladder truck. It was a gorgeous day this year, and we thank all who attended as well as the many sponsors and volunteers who made this event a success.

WE ARE CELEBRATING the homes in Royal Oak. In early September, nearly 100 homeowners attended a museum event to pick up a Centennial Home Certificate, issued at no cost by the Historical Society and embossed by the City of Royal Oak, designating their house as an official Centennial Home. Many homeowners also purchased a forged metal plaque with the official Royal Oak Historical Society seal to mark their home's status. Sales will benefit the preservation of the museum and the work of the Historical Society. The event also opened our "Residential Genealogy" exhibit, where homeowners are provided with a wide variety of resources to help uncover not only the history of their home but also the history of its residents. The exhibit runs through October 25. For more information on the certificates and plaques, see *Page 10*.

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL EUCHRE TOURNEY was held in the spring, and we are having yet another at 7 p.m. October 10 at Pronto in downtown Royal Oak. Please join us for this night of fun and meeting new people. Not a euchre player but want to learn? Sign up on our website to join our newcomers' table to learn. With a few hands of practice, you'll have the game down like a pro.

Historian and museum volunteer Don Drife will lead us on a tour of the Royal Oak Cemetery — resting place of Royal Oak's pioneer families since 1826 — on Sunday, October 12. This event is a short walking tour that will visit the graves of many notable individuals from Royal Oak. The cost is \$15, and tickets are available at our museum or online on our website. Limited space is available.

OUR 84TH ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DINNER is being held at 7 p.m. October 14 at the First United Methodist Church in Royal Oak. In celebrating our successes over the last years, we will also be honoring those who have committed themselves to the preservation of our history and to teaching others about our past. I invite all to attend our event. The cost is \$42 per person and will help us maintain our museum as the special place it is. See our website for details.

Your continued membership support is greatly appreciated and instrumental in helping our organization accomplish its tasks, not only in maintaining our museum but also in modernizing our archives and cataloging our collections. If you are not a member, we urge you to join and also tell a friend. Hope to see you soon. 🍁

SPEAKER SERIES — 7 p.m. at the museum

For details and to purchase tickets go to: royaloakhistoricalsociety.com

Friday, Oct. 17 — *Historic Home Research*

Leslie Snow from the Historic District Study Committee will speak about the criteria used to study historic homes and businesses and share tips for researching homes in Royal Oak that have received historical designation.

Friday, Nov. 14 — *The Edmund Fitzgerald*

Steve Mrozek will speak on the 50th anniversary of the sinking of the freighter.

Friday, Dec. 12 — *History of a Piece of Land*

Historian and board member Bob Muller will speak about the property, which now houses the high school, ice arenas, community center, Fred A. Erb Arboretum, Tenhave Woods, and residences. He will follow it through owners from Cromwell Goodwin, who purchased it from the United States in 1822, to when it came into city ownership after World War II. He will show the methods used to gather the information.

Curator's Corner

BY JOHANNA SCHURRER



Chris Dolin, left, admires her Centennial Home certificate with museum volunteer Adair Calder, right.

communications team for their hard work in designing the certificate and the exhibit panels, as well as a brochure on resources for researching your home and its former residents.

On Sept. 12, we had a great turnout — our largest ever at 71 — for archivist and volunteer Leslie Edwards' talk on "Storytelling through Maps." We had several attendees from communities other than Royal Oak, including Southfield, Milford, and Highland. Some of the Royal Oak centennial homeowners returned to hear the talk, while others came and picked up their certificates.



Local historian and museum volunteer Don Drife, right, helps visitors explore Royal Oak plat maps.

WE ARE WINDING DOWN a very busy 2025. We have had numerous successes, learned a great deal, and added exciting new exhibits along with refreshed display cases. New volunteers have brought additional skills and energy to our core volunteer team, helping us revamp our website and promote the Historical Society, as well as our museum exhibits and programs, in new ways. Our volunteer numbers have significantly increased this year compared to last year. In the coming months, we will be seeking additional volunteers to become museum docents by hosting several training sessions. Historian Don Drife will join me in providing short history talks for each session. If you are interested in learning more about our docent program, please get in touch with me at curator@royaloakhistoricalociety.org.

On Sept. 7, we had a very successful opening for our exhibit "Residential Genealogy: Beyond the Walls." Nearly 100 visitors attended the opening! In conjunction with the opening, homeowners with houses more than 100 years old were able to pick up complimentary Centennial Home certificates, talk with volunteers about their historic homes, and learn more about the research resources available for them. A big shout-out to our



Meredith Hapter and Kevin Dunn and their daughter show off their commemorative certificate.

VOLUNTEERS ALSO CONTINUE to better organize, catalog, photograph, and document our collections — both three-dimensional objects and archival materials. We want to continue these projects in the coming months to provide enhanced access for museum visitors and researchers. If you are interested in doing research, feel free to come during museum hours or schedule an appointment with me.

One of our newest collections is the Harold and Wilma Riegel YMCA Scrapbook Collection. This consists of four scrapbooks (primarily from the 1950s and 1960s) of the history of the South Oakland YMCA.

Included are photographs, correspondence, handwritten notes and illustrations, as well as program booklets of the Y's "Menette Club" — a club for the wives of the Men's Club. The collection will be available for research in the coming months.

DURING THE FIRST two weeks of November, we will once again host the annual art show of the South Oakland Art Association. The show will run from Nov. 1–15 with an opening and awards ceremony from 2–5 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 2, where you can meet the artists.

Due to the popularity of two of our main exhibits this year, we will reinstall both the "Residential Genealogy" exhibit and our exhibit on Royal Oak's Freedom Seekers. The "Residential Genealogy" will return starting Nov. 24, and the Freedom Seekers will be refreshed and begin in February. We are still planning what will follow them in March, so stay tuned on our website and social media. 🌱

Frentz Hardware • Continued from Page 1

There have been many chapters in our family's journey since then. In the early years, our father poured his energy into building a reputation for service, reliability, and personal knowledge, values that became the foundation of the store. He wasn't involved in politics or public affairs, but he served the community in his own way, every day, by helping customers find exactly the correct item or offering advice based on years of experience. That personal connection is what so many people have remembered fondly over the years, and it was no accident. It was my father's philosophy that customers should be treated like neighbors.

ONE PIVOTAL MOMENT in the store's history occurred in 1963, when the City of Royal Oak planned to realign the offset intersection of Catalpa and Gardenia at Main Street, directly where our store was located. Initially, the city intended to demolish the building to connect the roads. My father was prepared to relocate the business elsewhere in Royal Oak. However, in the end, the city decided to reconfigure the streets around the store instead, preserving our place at that unique intersection — a testament, perhaps, to how deeply embedded the business had become in the landscape and identity of the area.



George W. Frentz getting sleds ready for the winter season. Check out the kegs of nails and old bolt bins. Circa 1949.

My three brothers, John, Kim, George (known as "Chip"), and my sister Sally, and I all began working at the store in our early teens. We were encouraged to pursue other paths after high school, and we did. But over time, we each found our way back, joining the business full-time. Throughout the 1970s and into the early 2000s, we worked alongside my parents and a crew of dedicated full-time and part-time employees. The next generation followed in our footsteps. My two sons, who currently work at the store, my daughter, and all three of my brother John's sons also worked there over the years, continuing the family tradition and connection to the community.

the late 1960s to the early 2000s. We served generations of Royal Oak residents, helping them maintain and repair their homes, many of which are now more than a century old. We were known not just for hardware, but for our extensive toy department, which we carried up until 1978, when competition from Toys"R"Us led us to step away from that part of the business.

Throughout the years, we adapted to change, from competition with Hilzinger's Ace Hardware downtown (another fine Royal Oak institution) to the arrival of big-box stores like Builders Square and Handy Andy in the 1980s, to Home Depot and Lowe's in the late 1990s. Eventually, smaller Ace Hardware chains also expanded into the area, and today there are three within a three-mile radius of our store. Combined with the growing shift toward online shopping, these changes significantly altered the local hardware retail landscape.

DESPITE THESE CHALLENGES, Frentz & Sons Hardware persevered, not just as a business, but as an integral part of the story of Royal Oak. We've had the honor of helping neighbors, watching generations come through our doors, and providing the kind of personal service that's harder to find today.

As we prepare for the day when the store finally closes, we do so with immense gratitude. We thank the Royal Oak community for 93 years of support, trust, and friendship. While the storefront may one day go dark, the memories, the stories, and the relationships we've built will always remain a cherished part of Royal Oak's history. 🌱



Founder George W. Frentz and his wife Alice were familiar faces at the store over the years. Circa 1949.



The front of the store with the original sign on Main Street, around 1940.



Brothers John, Chip, and Mike Frentz began working at the store in their early teens, and several of their kids carried on the family tradition of working there too, continuing the standard of staying connected with the community.

Pete Dawkins: Royal Oak's Hometown Hero

By Judy Davids

IN THE SUMMER OF 1959, the Royal Oak City Commission unanimously passed a resolution declaring July 23 as “Pete Dawkins Day” — an official salute to a hometown hero whose name was making headlines across the country. From neighborhood kid to national icon, Dawkins' story remains one of the most remarkable to ever come out of Royal Oak.

Peter Miller Dawkins was born in 1938 and spent his formative years on Roseland Avenue before the family moved to Greenleaf Avenue, where they lived during his rise to prominence.

Dawkins attended Northwood Elementary School; however, at age 11, he contracted polio but underwent successful treatment. He later went to Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills, where he was an All-League quarterback and captain of the baseball team. Dawkins showed promise, but few could have predicted the list of achievements he would rack up before the age of 25.

In 1955, Dawkins was accepted to the United States Military Academy at West Point. Four years later, in 1959, he graduated as First Captain of the Corps of Cadets, the academy's highest leadership position. That alone would be notable. But in the same whirlwind year, Dawkins was also named a Rhodes Scholar, became an All-American football player, and won the Heisman Trophy — college football's most prestigious honor.

IN HIS YEARS ON THE FIELD at West Point, where he was a halfback and left-handed passer, Dawkins rushed for 1,123 yards, threw 16 passes, seven for touchdowns, caught 27 passes for 716 yards, and scored 158 points. As a senior, Dawkins rushed for 428 yards and five touchdowns, caught another six TDs through the air, and totaled another 294 yards on punt and kick returns. He finished with 1,216 all-purpose yards and 12 TDs as the Black Knights went undefeated for the season with an 8-0-1 record and ranked third in the country.

As a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, he played for the University's rugby team for three years. He later attended Princeton, where he received a Master's of Public Administration and a Ph.D. In his 24-year military career, Dawkins reached the rank of Brigadier General and retired to enter the business world.

Dawkins' achievements were so extensive and distinctive that *Life* magazine dubbed him the “Cadet of the Century,” a title that has followed him for decades. He was featured in national publications, in newspapers, and on radio and TV.

A letter to the Royal Oak City Commission in July 1959 urged the city to recognize Dawkins, saying:

“Although I have never met Mr. Dawkins, I am of the opinion that he has been a fine example to the youth of our community and our country. As a citizen of Royal Oak, I feel our city would be remiss if we did not observe a ‘Pete Dawkins Day’.”

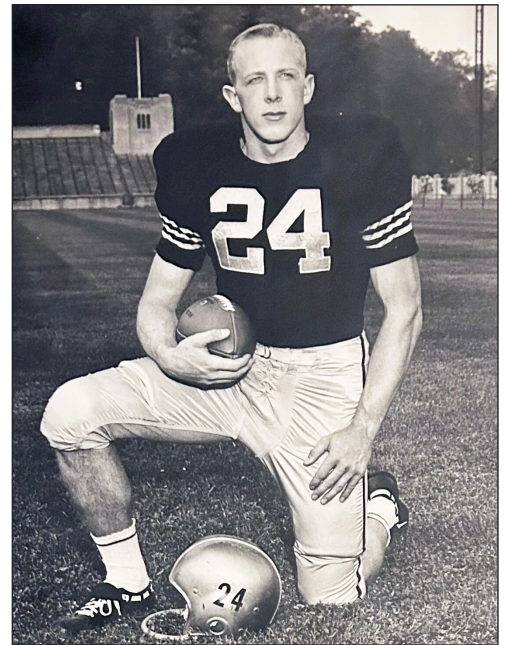
COMMISSIONERS AGREED. A committee of local leaders and Chamber of Commerce members organized a recognition program. On July 23, 1959, Royal Oak officially celebrated Pete Dawkins Day, honoring not only his accomplishments but also the values of excellence, leadership, and service he embodied.

Pete's younger sister, Susan, was just 10 years old when she attended the first Pete Dawkins Day luncheon at Red Run Golf Club in 1959. A 1966 graduate of Dondero High School, she recently reflected on her family's roots via email:

“Our mother grew up in Royal Oak, Pete grew up in Royal Oak, and I grew up in Royal Oak. Our parents had two families, one before the (Vietnam) war and one after. So, our Royal Oak experiences were probably different. But Royal Oak was a great place to grow up. We played outside until the streetlights came on. We could ride our bikes downtown. We often walked to and from school.”

Today, Pete Dawkins remains a living legend. At 87, he is currently the oldest living Heisman Trophy winner and the only Michigan native to have ever received the award.

While Dawkins' journey has taken him across the world, it all started right here in Royal Oak. His story serves as a reminder that greatness doesn't just happen in far-off places — it can grow in the neighborhoods we pass every day. From the quiet streets of Roseland and Greenleaf to the national stage, Dawkins' legacy is one Royal Oak can proudly call its own. 🍁



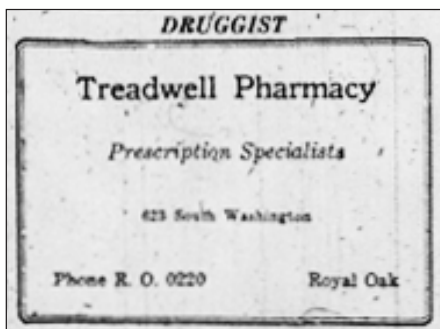
Pete Dawkins during his playing days at the United States Military Academy.



Life magazine's April 8, 1966, cover story on Dawkins.

Royal Oak Then & Now

BY JOHN MAURICE



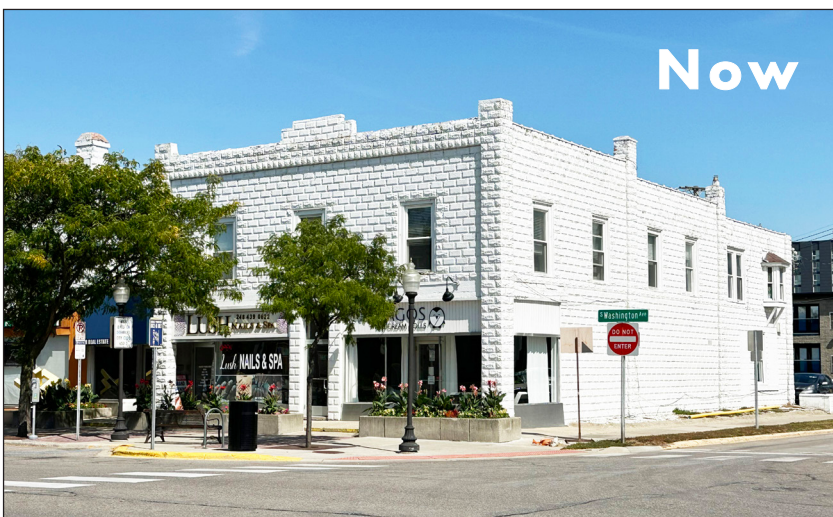
A Daily Tribune advertisement from 1932. On February 28, 1942, the paper reported that owner S.J. Treadwell had permanently closed the pharmacy because of orders to report for active military duty.

IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY, through the 1930s and until 1948, electric streetcars traversed the streets of Royal Oak via the interurban bound for Detroit or routes northward. The streetcar in the THEN photo above is seen turning off South Washington onto Seventh Street. This was an area where the streetcars would stop for awhile or turn around after arriving from Woodward Avenue. The business on the corner was the Treadwell Pharmacy.

The streetcars would then continue up Washington to Fourth Street, where they would turn east onto Main Street and proceed north or south. At its peak, in addition to traveling south to Detroit, the interurban would travel north to Flint, Romeo, and Imlay City. This trolley is number 3952 and advertises "Open All Summer! Great Lakes Bowling Centre Cooled by Refrigeration Woodward at Baltimore." Where the

Great Lakes Bowling Centre once stood in Midtown is now, coincidentally, the site of a Detroit Amtrak station.

The building that the streetcar is passing was constructed in 1910 and still stands at 621-623 South Washington. The building has been situated in a prime location to view the numerous Royal Oak parades that have taken place throughout the years. Being one of downtown's oldest buildings, it was also the site, in the early years, where horses were tied up in front of it. The storefront housed several different retailers over the years, including a drugstore, clothing stores, dentist offices, paint stores, and others.



NOW photo shows the current retailers in the building at Washington and Seventh — Lush Nails & Spa and Pagos Ice Cream Rolls. Photo by John Maurice

Puzzle Page

Word Search — Early Landowners of Royal Oak



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Benjamin	Goodwin	Lockwood	Stephens
Campbell	Harris	Millerd	Voorheis
Chappel	Hoagland	Quick	Wheeler
Chase	Johnson	Rose	Willson
Ellwood	Locklin	Standley	Youngs

Quiz — State Street Names

See how well you know Royal Oak street names! Which state names are NOT streets in our city?

Connecticut Avenue	Virginia Avenue	Kansas Avenue
Delaware Avenue	Rhode Island Avenue	Indiana Avenue
Vermont Avenue	Michigan Avenue	New Hampshire Avenue
California Avenue	Montana Avenue	

Answers to puzzles on Page 10

Bill Freehan • Continued from Page 1



The Daily Tribune, July 30, 1953

Eleven-year-old Bill Freehan on the Royal Oak Tool team takes a healthy cut at bat at Memorial Park in Royal Oak.

next to Leo's Coney Island.) During the time Freehan's family lived in Royal Oak, his father, Ashley J. Freehan, was a sales representative for L.A. Young Spring & Wire Co. in Detroit. However, he was seeking more opportunities, and at the end of the 1955 Royal Oak baseball season, he bought the Hollywood Apartments and Trailer Camp in St. Petersburg, Florida, and relocated the family.

FREEHAN ATTENDED NINTH GRADE at St. Paul's Catholic High School in St. Petersburg. During his sophomore year, he and the other boys at St. Paul's transferred to the new, all-boys Bishop Barry Catholic High School, also in St. Petersburg. Freehan excelled in football, basketball, and baseball, earning All-Tampa Bay Conference honors in all three sports for his final two years. Not only did Freehan excel in sports, but he was also the valedictorian of his graduating class.

Even after moving to Florida, Freehan managed to return to the Royal Oak area each summer to continue his local baseball career. In 1956, he picked up where he left off in 1955, continuing to play for Enners Restaurant. When Freehan returned in the summer of 1957, his last year in the Joe DiMaggio League, Jim Enners, the restaurant's owner and baseball sponsor, was quoted in the July 29, 1957, *Daily Tribune*, "Bill is a fine boy all the way around. I don't see how he can miss. I've seen a lot of players on Royal Oak sandlots in the last dozen years, but he's the best in my book." In the same article, Enners said, "Freehan on size alone has the makings of a major league catcher. He's only 15 and weighs 185 muscular pounds at 6'2"."

When Freehan returned in 1958, he played for Beauchamps, a Class E team in the Detroit Baseball Federation for players 16 and younger. In August of that year, Beauchamps won its second consecutive Class E title with Freehan getting three hits in four at-bats.

IN THE SUMMER OF 1959, he joined a Detroit Class D team, Lundquist Insurance. Lundquist played in the 1959 National Amateur Baseball Junior League tournament in Altoona, Pennsylvania, where they were named co-champions with Cincinnati after rain forced the cancellation of their final game. In the semi-final game against Maryland State, Freehan had three hits, including a triple, scored three runs, and drove in one run for an RBI.

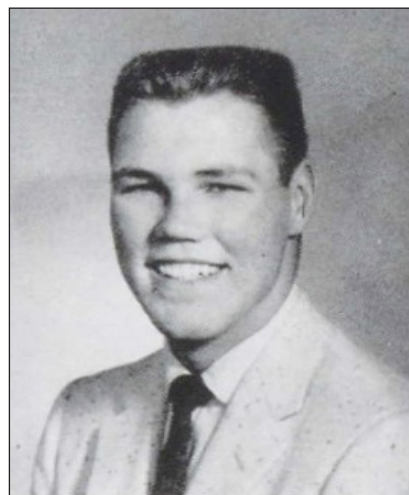
In 1960, he was playing again for Lundquist, this time alongside future Detroit Tigers teammate Willie Horton. The two of them led Lundquist to its third straight National Amateur Baseball Federation championship in August 1960.

born in Detroit on November 29, 1941. In late 1949, his family moved into a modest three-bedroom bungalow at 2403 Benjamin, and Freehan started third grade at Shrine Grade School, where he was also an altar boy. Two years later, in June 1951, 9-year-old Freehan joined the newly formed Royal Oak Midget Baseball League for boys 12 and under. It didn't take long before his name appeared in *The Daily Tribune* for contributing two of the seven hits playing for a team sponsored by the Royal Oak Tool and Machine Co. (The company was at 621 E. Fourth Street, where Ingram Wholesale Siding is now located.) His team defeated Tom's Northwood Market, 7-3. This was the first time Freehan's name appeared in a newspaper.

THE FOLLOWING YEAR, in an article written by Dayton Perrin, sports editor of *The Daily Tribune*, on June 18, 1952, Freehan's name is mentioned for getting two doubles and a home run in a losing effort to Royal Oak Boys' Wear. Perrin's article praised Royal Oak's highly successful Midget Baseball League, which began its second season at Memorial Park before a crowd of more than 500 people. Perrin wrote, "And ahead lie the unpredictable, never-know-what's-next antics of 15 teams of youngsters, some of whom may be taking the very first steps toward a major-league berth in the future." Perrin did not know how right he was.

Freehan had several mentions in *The Daily Tribune* throughout the rest of 1952 and into 1953. He played in his first Royal Oak Midget Baseball World Series at Memorial Park in Royal Oak in late August 1953. Midget Baseball was divided into two leagues: the American League and the National League. In 1953, Kelly Office Machines won the National League playoffs, and Tom's Northwood Market won for the American League. Apparently, the winning teams could add players from their league to strengthen their World Series teams. Freehan, a member of the Royal Oak Tool team, was chosen to boost Tom's Market's chances. He did not disappoint, delivering two singles and a home run. However, it was not enough, as Kelly Office Machines won the game 9-8 in the bottom of the ninth inning. Kelly also won game 2, two nights later, to clinch the series.

Freehan continued playing for Royal Oak Tool in 1954 before joining the Enners Restaurant team in the Joe DiMaggio League in 1955. (Enners was located at 106 S. Main St., in the building now occupied by Royal Oak Masala – Indian Cuisine,



Bill Freehan in 1958 as a junior and president of his class at the all-boys Bishop Barry High School in St. Petersburg, Florida.

The 402-Foot Blast

Long before the pros, a young Bill Freehan made jaws drop at Memorial Park's Field Number 3. It was an extraordinary feat still talked about by longtime locals. The future Tigers star launched a 402-foot home run in the 1950s — clearing the outfield, soaring over the former concession stand, and, some say, then rolled onto 13 Mile Road.

Today, Field Number 3 is home to the Royal Oak Leprechauns and the Royal Oak Sandlot League, where many promising players are making an early name for themselves. However, that towering shot by young Freehan remains one of Memorial Park's most legendary highlights.



After graduating from Bishop Barry High School in 1959, Freehan had several scholarships to choose from. The University of Michigan offered him either a baseball or football scholarship, with the promise that he could play both sports regardless of which scholarship he accepted. Wanting to participate in both, he chose Michigan. With Freehan now attending school in Ann Arbor, his parents, wishing to stay close, bought a home at 4333 Buckingham in Royal Oak.

WHILE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, Freehan played both football and baseball during his first two years of college. He was a linebacker and end on the football team and a catcher on the baseball team. Although he was a developing football player and received the Most Improved Freshman award in the spring of 1960, his football skills did not match his baseball talent. In the 1961 baseball season, his batting average was .585, setting a Big Ten record that still stands today.

With that performance, Detroit Tigers scout Louis D'Annunzio, who had been watching Freehan since he was 15 years old, added the Tigers' offer to those from other major league clubs. The Tigers offered Freehan \$125,000 to sign a contract. While the money was significant, the chance to play for his hometown team mattered most. Upon signing, Freehan made an agreement with his father that he wouldn't touch the money until he earned his college degree. He kept his promise and attended school during the off-season, earning his bachelor's in history in 1966.

During his early Detroit Tiger career, he married his high school sweetheart, Patricia Ann O'Brien, on February 23, 1963. They met at St. Paul's Catholic High School during their freshman year. In the ensuing years, they had three daughters: Corey, Kelley, and Cathy.

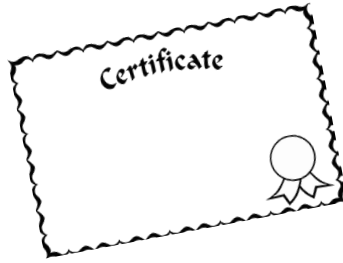
FREEHAN'S YEARS WITH THE TIGERS are legendary and well-publicized. He retired from baseball on December 12, 1976, having spent his entire major league career with the Tigers. He started his own company, an automobile manufacturer's representative agency, where he worked with former teammate Jim Northrup. However, baseball was still in his blood, and in 1989, he took a furlough from his business career to become the head baseball coach at the University of Michigan. He continued in that position until 1995, when he left to reestablish his business interests. However, the Detroit Tigers did lure him back from 2002 to 2005 to instruct the organization's catchers.

In later years, apart from a few appearances and mentions here and there, Freehan was quietly retired. Then, in October 2018, the *Detroit Free Press* announced that Bill Freehan was under hospice care for dementia at his home in northern Michigan. His wife, Pat, and others believed that his condition resulted from the numerous blows to the head he sustained during his baseball and football careers. Freehan remained in hospice with Pat as his caregiver for nearly three more years before passing away from Alzheimer's disease on August 19, 2021, at age 79. He is buried in the columbarium at St. Hugo of the Hills Catholic Church in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

Despite his passing, Freehan's legacy endures. He is a native son who gained fame through his natural talent and the volunteers and sponsors who provided him with opportunities. 🍌



Four generations of Freehans pose with a life-size cutout of Tiger Bill Freehan at a tribute this summer at Memorial Park, including his wife, Pat, daughter Kelley, grandson Blaise Salter, and great-grandsons.



Celebrating Your 100-Year-Old Home

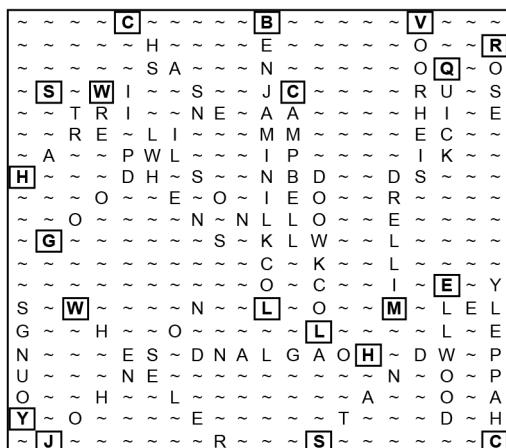
The Royal Oak Historical Society has been marking the centennial milestone of the 548 houses built in 1925 in various ways, allowing homeowners to commemorate their historic homes.

If your house is 100 years old or more, we offer:

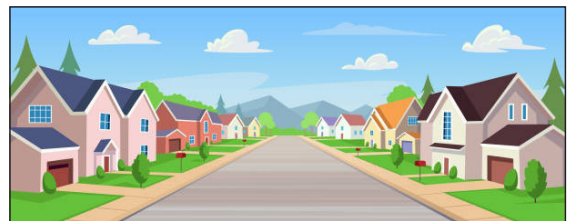
- A **Centennial Home Certificate**, issued by the Historical Society and embossed by the City of Royal Oak, designating your house as an official centennial home, is available for order at the museum at no cost. If you would like a certificate in recognition of your home's 100-year-old legacy of contributing to the history of our community, **email your request to curatorrohs@gmail.com** by October 31. All requests will be verified.
- When your certificate is ready, it will be available for pickup at the museum from 1 to 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday.
- Homeowners will be able to **purchase a forged metal plaque** designating their home's centennial status with the official Royal Oak Historical Society seal. The plaques are \$180 and sales will benefit the preservation of the museum and the work of the Historical Society. Due to demand, email your request to curatorrohs@gmail.com.
- Homeowners of centennial homes, as well as others, who visit the museum can **research their home** and discover any permits issued for any home improvements made on the house since it was built. Information will be available on deeds, subdivision records, abstract titles, plat maps, and photographs. **"Residential Genealogy" will illuminate the wide variety of resources** you can use to help uncover not only the history of your home but also its residents. The exhibit runs through October 25 and will return November 24.

If you want to know more about the history of many of the houses and businesses in the city, a second edition of the book *Royal Oak Images, Yesterday's Charm, Today's Treasures*, homes from which have been highlighted in past newsletters, will be available for sale at the museum. Check our website for updates. 🍁

Puzzle Page answers



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The following are NOT street names in Royal Oak:

Kansas Avenue
Michigan Avenue
Montana Avenue
New Hampshire Avenue

However, at one time, Ten Mile Road was called New Hampshire Road through Royal Oak.

Homes & Buildings in Royal Oak

EDITED BY JOHN S. SCHULTZ

In each newsletter, the Royal Oak Historical Society features stories on historic homes and buildings in our city. The selections come from the book *Royal Oak Images, Yesterday's Charm Today's Treasures* (Roundtable of Royal Oak Historical Organizations, 2006). A second edition of this book is in the works.

We encourage other Royal Oak residents to share the history of their home for possible publication. For more information, contact John S. Schultz, co-author of *Images of America: Royal Oak*, at jsschultz11@gmail.com.

Prien (widow of John C.), and George O. Trick; 1960 — Margo Moxley (employee of J.L. Hudson Co.), Mrs. Pearl M. Gage (widow of Archie J.), and Helen Smith (teacher in Troy).

Ronald and Mariane Peludat were former owners of the building. 🍁

Early City Apartment

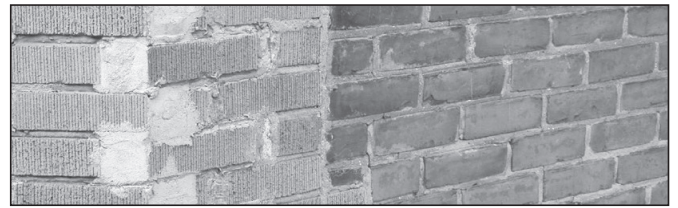
605 West Hudson Avenue

Five-Resident Apartment Built in 1924

THIS BRICK APARTMENT BUILDING for four tenants is located just off Woodward Avenue. It has a unique floor plan with the exterior style providing dormers that mimic the peaked roofs on the front façade of the building. The many windows provide lots of natural light. The front door is unique, as are the other doors. On the back of the south side is a dust porch.

New windows, vinyl cedar shingles, and masonry work were done in about 1994. The framing and panels on the front screened porches are painted green for a pleasant accent to the yellow brick.

According to *Polk City Directories* (which were published every two to three years), some of the building's residents over the years included: 1933 — James R. McCordic and his wife Elza; 1936 — Arthur G. Cockman and wife Mary B., and Walter E. Hall and wife Florence; 1940 — David J. Moore and wife Mildred, and Ernest Berry and wife Elva; 1950 — Mrs. Garnet P. Miller, Mrs. Francisca



The building has two kinds of common brick: yellow raked brick shown on the left, and common red brick on the right.



Stories Behind the Gravestones

BY DON DRIFE



CIVIL WAR VETERAN SAMUEL WILLSON AND WIFE SARAH WILLSON

BY DON DRIFE

ROYAL OAK CEMETERY IS WHERE many veterans are laid to rest. Veterans of all U.S. wars, starting with the Revolution and ending with Vietnam, are represented there.

Samuel James Willson was born in Cherry Valley, New York, on February 24, 1839. In 1860, he attended Westfield Academy in Chautauqua County, New York. He taught school in Indiana and, in the spring of 1861, enrolled in Wabash College. Leaving school at the start of the Civil War he enlisted for three months starting on April 1, 1861, in Company H of the 11th Indiana Volunteers and at the end of term re-enlisted in the same regiment for a second term of three years as a second lieutenant. His service included battles at Fort Donelson and Shiloh before his transfer to the Signal Corps at Paducah, Kentucky.

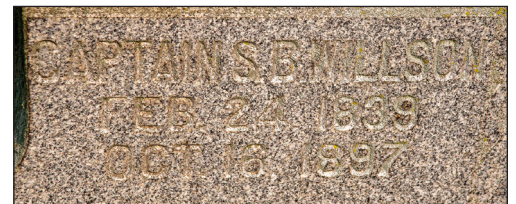
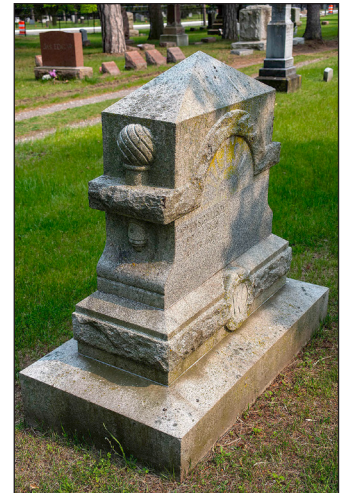
In August 1862, he was forced to resign because of his health. In November of that same year, he re-enlisted at the rank of captain in Company K of the 54th Indiana Volunteers. He was wounded at the battle of Chickasaw Bluff in December 1862 and removed from duty. Returning to active duty in May 1863, he was at the battle of Magnolia Hill, took part in the siege of Vicksburg, and then went with General William Tecumseh Sherman to Jackson, Mississippi. Capt. Willson was then given command of the Pioneer Corps of the 9th division. He again had health problems and was discharged in 1863.

He returned to Westfield, New York, and married Sarah E. Shrove on February 3, 1864. The couple moved to Indiana, back to New York, then to Iowa. In 1874, they came to Royal Oak Township, renting a farm in the area that is now Ferndale. They moved to the Village of Royal Oak in 1877. In 1882, they bought 40 acres on the southwest corner of 12 Mile Road and Main Street.

CAPT. WILLSON WAS TOWNSHIP school superintendent, a school inspector, a justice of the peace, a census compiler, and a notary public. A proud member of the Republican Party, at one point he bragged about casting his first vote for Abraham Lincoln and going on to cast votes for all the Republicans through Benjamin Harrison. He served as a delegate at county and state Republican conventions.

The couple had seven children: Charles, John, Mary, Sarah, Albert W., Robert, and Anna. Sarah, Robert, and Anna all died young. Samuel and Sarah were active in the Methodist Episcopal Church. They taught Sunday school and Samuel served as a steward and a trustee in the church. He was often chosen to be the lay delegate at the annual conference of the M.E. church. Samuel died on October 16, 1897, at the farm in Royal Oak Township.

Sarah continued to reside in Royal Oak and various children and grandchildren are listed in the household on the U.S. census. She died at the farm on December 14, 1912, at the age of 74.



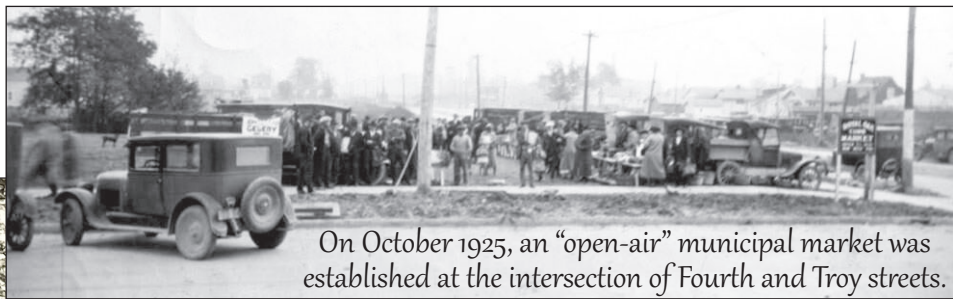
The Willson monument (top) is inscribed with Capt. S.B. Willson's name and dates of birth and death (bottom), but his wife Sarah's name and information were never added.



Both Samuel and Sarah are buried in Royal Oak Cemetery near the impressive Willson marker. Unfortunately, Samuel's middle initial is incorrect on the marker; it should be "J." not "B." and Sarah's name was never added. She is buried under a marker that simply says "Mother."

ONE OF SAMUEL AND SARAH'S SONS, Albert W., held numerous offices in Oakland County and Royal Oak village. In Royal Oak township he was a supervisor, a clerk, treasurer, president, and justice of the peace. For 25 years he sat on the school board of district No. 6. One of his passions was the consolidation of all of the physical township of Royal Oak into one city. In 1918 he was convicted of "irregularities in office" and sentenced to one to 14 years in Jackson prison. The Michigan Supreme Court granted a retrial, however, Prosecuting Attorney Glenn C. Gillespie, did not seek a new trial citing "great improvement in the methods of handling township affairs." Albert's legal problems caused him to lose the 1918 election for township supervisor, but he was reelected in 1920. He died on February 12, 1939.

This series highlights people buried in Royal Oak's three cemeteries as we approach the bicentennial of Royal Oak Cemetery in 2026. If readers know other information on the featured person, please send it to donalddrife@comcast.net.



On October 1925, an "open-air" municipal market was established at the intersection of Fourth and Troy streets.

In 1927, a permanent brick building, measuring 23,000 square feet, was constructed at its current location on Troy Street and 11 Mile Road. The Farmers Market was designated as a historic district in May 2021.

ROYAL OAK'S FARMERS MARKET CELEBRATES 100 YEARS

BY JOHN S. SCHULTZ

IN SEPTEMBER 1925, the Royal Oak City Commission began discussion of establishing a municipal market after a study by a city committee recommended that "such a market be established immediately." A.L. Bell, the Pontiac market master, said he believed Royal Oak could organize a market with considerable success." He said the market would be an assistance to the grocers and other dealers. Initially, the Oakland County Board of Supervisors agreed to cover 60 percent of the market's cost, as they had with the Pontiac market. The city would pay the other 40 percent.

A month later, on October 1, the site for the "open-air" municipal market was established at the intersection of Fourth and Troy streets. Mary A. Jenner owned the land, which was leased for a year with an option to renew in one to two years. In October 1925, the market, known as the Royal Oak Curb Market, opened at 7 a.m. Its days of operation were Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Farmers were charged 25 cents per vehicle to bring in their fresh produce to sell. Since its inception, the market has maintained a strict "farmer must grow" rule, allowing only farmers who grow their own produce to participate. On opening day, there were an impressive 40 farm vehicles, some from as far as 30 miles away.

In 1926, following the tremendous success of the curbside market, discussions began to build a facility for the market at 11 Mile and Troy Street, three blocks from the open-air location. In late fall, the city and county approved the purchase of the site for \$46,000, with Royal Oak contributing \$25,000.

IN 1927, A PERMANENT BRICK BUILDING, measuring 23,000 square feet, was constructed at its current location on Troy Street and 11 Mile Road. The roof was made of cement tile, with two rows of lights, and the floor was concrete, allowing cars to drive in for unloading. On its first day of business, more than 300 consumers purchased goods from 75 producers. Some family members from the original producer vendors continue to sell at the market today.

In 1941, rabbit, farm fresh butter, and buttermilk were among the items farmers sold. During World War II, meat, dairy products, and butter were rationed. The grounds of the community market were used for Home Guard volunteer practices and Boy Scout drum-and-bugle corps drills.

Over the years, the building has been used for square dances, Halloween parties, public meetings, craft shows, and even weddings. Additionally, on Memorial Day, it's the perfect location for the Royal Oak Historical Society to host its annual Pancake Breakfast fundraiser, before the city's popular Memorial Day parade.

BY 1950, THE MARKET had 110 farmer vendors. In 1960, the community market's name was officially changed to Royal Oak Farmers Market. The trendy regional Sunday flea market, which began in 1978 as a way to supplement the market's income, now has 90 vendors. Along with war relics, Depression-era figurines and glassware, vendors sell antiques, handicrafts, and collectibles.

When redevelopment threatened the market's existence in 1996, demonstrators protested the proposed sale of the market. The city, which owned 40 percent, then purchased the remaining 60 percent from the county, thereby saving the market.

Today, the Farmers Market still maintains its strict "farmer must grow" rule but also includes a wide variety of meats, cheeses, poultry, seafood, dairy products, vegan and gluten-free options, and locally produced specialty food products. 🍄

Looking Back

COLLECTED AND EDITED BY JOHN S. SCHULTZ FROM THE PAGES OF THE DAILY TRIBUNE

What was happening in Royal Oak ...

50 years ago — 1975

ROYAL OAK RECORDED a 638-pupil decrease, lower than the 783 projected loss, according to the preliminary reports of the "Fourth Friday" enrollment counts in Oakland County. Only two districts — Brandon, in north central Oakland County, and Pontiac — recorded increases. While a few districts reported more kindergarten pupils than expected, this was not the case for all districts. Elementary enrollment overall continued to decline over the past five years.

ROYAL OAK CITY COMMISSION'S adoption nearly a year ago of the state Construction Code is prompting the city's chief building inspector to require all homeowners to install smoke detection equipment. Leslie V. Watch, the city building inspector, announced the requirement. Mayor James P. Cline said the change was news to him. He said he doesn't own a detector, but he has been considering installing one in his home. Smoke detectors cost between \$25 and \$50 to install. City Attorney Daniel Sawicki, who advised Watch that the smoke detector provision of the state's Construction Code could apply to single-family homeowners as well as apartment owners, said he became aware of the provision last week.

60 years ago — 1965

A FIRM REPRESENTING the Fraternal Order of Police was under attack by the Royal Oak Police Department for alleged misrepresentation during a fundraising campaign. Police Chief Herman Potts said he has received numerous calls from citizens who claim to have been contacted, urging them to purchase tickets for a benefit dance on Oct. 2. In soliciting funds, the caller stated that he represented the FOP lodge, whose membership includes officers from the city being called. Potts said the department is in no way opposed to the FOP, which he praised for its many worthwhile activities; however, he said, the department is opposed to its method of solicitation. After the police met with the company, a spokesman stated that no further calls would be made to Royal Oak residents. The spokesman said the misunderstanding was on the part of a new employee "who apparently talked out of turn."

AN ADVERTISEMENT for the Packer Foods grocery store lists a dozen large eggs for 37 cents; Maxwell House Coffee (11 oz, package), 57 cents; Jell-O Gelatin, 7 cents; and hamburger, 3 pounds or more at 38 cents a pound.

ROYAL OAK, IN A UNIQUE ATTEMPT to address its drive-in restaurant issues, is considering assigning on-duty city police to work at troubled establishments and asking drive-in owners to cover the costs. Police would work four five-hour shifts during peak hours.

70 years ago — 1955

PLANS FOR A HOWARD JOHNSON motel and restaurant at Fourteen Mile and I-75 were announced. Construction of a 110-room motor hotel, a restaurant, a meeting room seating 250, and a cocktail lounge can start 60 days after plans are adjusted to meet Howard Johnson's requirements.

A CORNERSTONE WILL BECOME a milestone when the marker tablet is officially lowered in place for the new \$1,250,000 home of the Michigan Life Insurance Company, Woodward south of Coolidge, Royal Oak. The ceremony will take place at the partially completed, four-story limestone building, placed on a three-acre site.

ROYAL OAK CITY COMMISSIONERS are confident that women hired for parking meter patrol will be able to take care of themselves. The commission politely rejected a recommendation of the city's Civil Service Board, which had opposed hiring women.

60 Years Ago — 1965



The Daily Tribune, September 15, 1965

PLEASE DON'T EAT THE DAHLIAS — *But nobody said anything about a little nibble here and there, so these Detroit Zoo chimps cheated a bit. What the boys really wanted to say was that the Zoo's fall dahlia display is in full bloom and the place isn't closed yet — not until Nov. 7.*

80 years ago — 1945

"ROYAL OAK MEMORIAL PARK" was suggested as a name to the city commission Monday night by the recreation board for city-owned property on Woodward Avenue between Coolidge and 13-Mile roads. The property, designated by Royal Oak as a memorial to its war dead, was formerly known as the Braybant property. The commission placed the board's suggestion on file.

THE POSSIBILITY OF INSTALLING parking meters throughout the business district of Royal Oak was briefly discussed at the Royal Oak City Commission meeting. The revival of interest in installing meters has arisen from the relaxation of materials no longer needed for the war effort.

SOUTH OAKLAND COUNTY SCHOOLS show an increase of 241 pupils in the student enrollment this fall. Total enrollment stood at 25,343 this year, compared to 25,102 in September 1944.

90 years ago — 1935

REHABILITATION OF THE OPEN track work of the Royal Oak-owned streetcar line on Woodward Avenue as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project will start Sept. 6 with the replacement of worn-out ties north of Eight Mile in Ferndale, the Royal Oak engineer said. The DSR delivered one thousand ties as the first unit consignment of materials, and the crew of 35 WPA "security wage" workers, who have been clearing the right-of-way, will place the first ties in the morning.

THE REV. CHARLES E. COUGHLIN returned to the Shrine of the Little Flower after a month's vacation, declared in an interview that President Roosevelt "stands for a brand of Russian Communism. Norman Thomas (candidate for president of the Socialist ticket at the last election) is a piker when compared with the President," Father Coughlin stated. "After all, Thomas stands for a good band of American Socialism, while Roosevelt stands for a poor brand of Russian Communism."

THE FIRST AUTHENTIC TOUCH of Indian summer hit the area yesterday (Sept. 19), with the temperature reaching a record 92 in Royal Oak and vicinity as Old Sol played a brief engagement to a rather unappreciative audience. Coats, vests, and woolen dresses remained in the closets as the mercury hit the highest point recorded for this date in 44 years.

100 years ago — 1925

DR. WILLIAM H. PHELPS, 715 West Fourth Street, Royal Oak, editor of the *Michigan Christian Advocate*, is named along with Dr. Lynn Harold Hough, pastor of the Central Methodist Episcopal Church of Detroit, in a charge of heresy brought by Dr. Levi Bird, minister of Port Sanilac. Twenty-seven separate charges have been brought, based largely on the views of the two ministers regarding the Bible and evolution. Neither of the two ministers is regarded as an extreme modernist, while Dr. Bird is looked on as a fundamentalist of the old school.

Formal hearing must be given to the charges, but if the opinions of the leading Methodist ministers of Detroit are any indication, they will amount to nothing. Dr. E.J. Warren, district superintendent of the Detroit conference, before whom the charges against Dr. Hough were brought, and many others, have expressed their opinions that the orthodoxy of Dr. Phelps and Dr. Hough is unquestioned. The charges were based on sermons of Dr. Hough and editorial comment by Dr. Phelps in the *Advocate*.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES AND SHINING morning faces once more became a part of everyday life when the doors of the Royal Oak public schools swung open Wednesday (Sept. 8) for the enrollment of the largest number of pupils ever taught in the schools of the city. New teachers and additional facilities have been added to those of last year to accommodate the increase and to fill the vacancies left by teachers who have resigned or been granted leaves of absence.

AN UNUSUAL CALM PERVADED the Business District of Royal Oak, when a majority of the business places were closed. The Wednesday afternoon closings will be in effect in these places during June, July, and August. The Merchants Association of the Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring the initiative, with a significant number of its members participating. In some lines of business, all the merchants have not yet agreed on the closing, while in others, there are special conditions that the proprietors say make closing inadvisable. The banks started closing Wednesday afternoon more than a year ago, and found the plan worked out so satisfactorily that they have continued it through the entire 12 months. Like most retail stores, they are also open on Saturday evenings. 🍁

Looking Back entries are taken directly from past articles printed in The Daily Tribune and in some cases the actual wording is used to convey the language, wording, and punctuation of the time.





ROYAL OAK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Individual: \$30 _____ Family: \$50 _____ Club: \$200 _____ Sponsorship: \$300 _____ Benefactor: \$500 _____

Membership Has Its Perks! For information about membership levels and benefits,
please visit our website: royaloakhistoricalsociety.com

GENERAL DONATION: \$ _____

Thank You for Your Support!

Make checks payable to: Royal Oak Historical Society, 1411 W. Webster Road, Royal Oak, MI 48073

Dues also are payable online at royaloakhistoricalsociety.com. Click on the Membership link to pay or set up automatic annual dues payment. For more information about membership levels and benefits, visit the website.

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