



ROYAL OAK Historical Society

OCTOBER 2026 • ROYALOAKHISTORICALSOCIETY.COM



Jacob Erb's store at the southeast corner of Main Street and Third Street was the Royal Oak Post Office intermittently from 1880 to 1914. Erb is standing on the left at the store's doorway. The three mail carriers in front are shown with the era's rural delivery modes — horse-drawn carts and a motorized bicycle.

game of horseshoes and "the telling of tall tales" and to discuss issues of national and local importance. It was a hub of this city's social life and a gateway to the outside world.

Lockwood did not have a long career. After five months, President Andrew Jackson appointed Samuel Torbet as the new postmaster, and he served until January 20, 1830. There was not enough business at the corner of what is now Washington and Fourth streets, so the post office operation was moved to Chase's Corners (currently 13 Mile Road and Crooks). Chase's Corners was the center of community events in the early days of Royal Oak Township. Joseph Chase and his son, David, ran a store there, which also served as the post office until 1841, when Moses Johnson took over as postmaster.

WITH THE ARRIVAL of the railroad in the region in 1838, the development of the Village of Royal Oak moved south to its current downtown location, and Chase's Corners was no longer the hub of activity. Postmaster Johnson began conducting postal service at his store at the northeast corner of Main and University streets.

The early postmasters rarely held office for long, typically serving two to three years, and the Royal Oak Post Office moved with them. During the Civil War, the post office was inside Jacob Erb's general store on Fifth Street near the railroad. This building was later moved to the corner of First [now Eleven Mile] and Main streets, where William Hilzinger used it as a milk house. (See the July 2026 newsletter.) From 1825 to 1861, Royal Oak had 13 postmasters and almost as many locations. At that time, residents had to pick up their own mail at the post office, as home mail delivery had not yet begun. Yet times were changing during the 1860s.

Continued on Page 4

THE HISTORY OF THE ROYAL OAK POST OFFICE

BY JOHN DICK

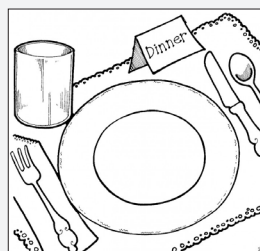
THE ROYAL OAK POST OFFICE building on the north side of West Second Street, between Center and Washington streets, has served the city's residents since its dedication in the summer of 1936. For 90 years, mail and packages have been delivered to Royal Oak residents six days a week out of the majestic Art Deco edifice. However, there has been a post office in the village/city since 1825, more than two centuries ago.

James Lockwood, the first Royal Oak postmaster, was appointed by President John Quincy Adams on April 6, 1825. Lockwood lived in a log cabin on the site of the present Washington Square Plaza. For early postmasters, running a post office was like owning a small business. It provided not only a source of revenue but also was a symbol of community prominence. The post office was often where men of the community gathered at dusk for a

Join Us for the Annual Dinner

Our 85th Annual Fundraising Dinner will be held on Tuesday, October 13, at the First United Methodist Church in Royal Oak. We will honor several individuals who have helped the Historical Society preserve our city's history and will install our board of directors and officers.

The event will begin at 6 p.m. with a social hour, followed by dinner at 7 p.m. Awards and a trivia game will follow dinner. The cost is \$42 per person. Register on our website or via the QR code at right.



Dinner reservations



ROYAL OAK
Historical Society

President: Tom Toggweiler

Vice President: Jay Dunstan

2nd Vice President: Deb Anderson

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Curator Emeritus

Muriel Versagi

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ROYAL OAK
Historical Museum

1411 West Webster Road
Royal Oak, MI 48073

royaloakhistoricalsociety.com

248-439-1501

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

EXHIBITS

"Where They Lie: Stories That
Royal Oak Cemeteries Tell"
through October 29

South Oakland Art Association
"Art at the Museum" Show and Sale
November 8 – 21

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

President's Message

BY TOM TOGGWEILER

HAPPY AUTUMN, DEAR MEMBERS!

Since our last newsletter, Royal Oak Historical Society volunteers have participated in several fundraisers and events to support our museum and our efforts to preserve our city's history.

Over the Fourth of July weekend, we participated in Taco Fest, which included reading the Preamble to the Constitution at Centennial Commons. We recruited volunteers from among those in attendance to help. In addition, we had visits from Paul Revere (on a horse, of course) and Benjamin Franklin.

On July 8 at exactly 6 p.m., we sponsored an official reading of the Declaration of Independence to honor our nation's 250th anniversary. We held this event to mirror the exact date and time when the document was originally read publicly to announce our freedom from England. Thirteen community leaders each read a portion of the document. It was a warm and powerful reminder of how our nation came to be and where we are today.

Without missing a beat, we held our annual car show on August 1. The cars were beautiful and, of course, loud; the food was superb, and we even dodged the forecast for rain. It is always a nice lead-up to the Woodward Dream Cruise, held a couple of Saturdays later.

AUTUMN MEANS it's time for the Historical Society's 85th Annual Fundraising Dinner, set for 6 p.m. on Tuesday, October 13, at the First United Methodist Church, Royal Oak. See *Page 1* for ticket information.

Our upcoming monthly speakers will present a range of interesting topics. Here are the highlights, with complete information at the bottom on this page.

On Friday, October 9, we will have a program on prominent figures locally and nationally who are honored in the Halls of Fame of Royal Oak Schools, St. Mary's, and Shrine Schools.

Friday, November 13, the Royal Oak Middle School Committee will share the building's history as it approaches its centennial in 2027. We also hope you can help us celebrate one of our community's historic jewels.

To end the year, on Friday, December 11, curator Johanna Schurrer and I will look at Royal Oak's downtown through photographs, comparing what the buildings look like now with what they looked like in 1950. It should be fun to reminisce and see how we remember the downtown's changes over the years.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY is saying goodbye to two of our long-standing board members this month. Jay and Patty Dunstan have devoted nearly 25 years to the Historical Society. They were instrumental in securing the former fire station as the permanent home of the Historical Society's Museum. We have relied on their guidance, knowledge, and action to keep our organization a vital part of the community, and we will miss their involvement and high energy. However, Jay has promised that he and Patty will continue to volunteer at our annual pancake breakfast in May. So come see them next Memorial Day!

On *Page 6* is a list of our current members. To all members, past and present, we cannot thank you enough for your support as we work toward our goals. 🍂

SPEAKER SERIES

2nd Friday of the month — 7 p.m. at the museum

Tickets: \$15. Go to royaloakhistoricalsociety.com and look under Events.

October 9 — "Royal Oak Schools Hall of Fame," with Kevin Walsh, Royal Oak Schools; Tom Dixon, St. Mary's; and Tom Toggweiler, alumni committee member, Shrine Schools.

November 13 — "Royal Oak Middle School 100th Anniversary Celebration Plans for 2027," 100th Anniversary Committee

December 11 — "Then and Now: Historic Mapping of Royal Oak," by Tom Toggweiler and Johanna Schurrer

Curator's Corner

BY JOHANNA SCHURRER

AS OUR MUSEUM'S CURATOR, I plan programs and exhibits, research public requests, and collaborate with my dedicated team of volunteers to manage and improve the museum.

Our volunteers are essential to our museum, providing critical operational support and enhancing visitor experiences. They greet our guests, answer questions, and set a welcoming tone at the door. In addition to serving as docents, they help catalog artifacts, transcribe historical documents, and digitize fragile records.

If you are interested in being a part of the museum, please contact me at 248-439-1501.

IN EXHIBIT NEWS, "Where They Lie: Stories That Royal Oak Cemeteries Tell," is back by popular demand through October 29.

Our volunteers are currently researching information for our upcoming exhibit on the history of *The Daily Tribune*, which will open in January. The family-owned newspaper served as the paper of record for Royal Oak and the surrounding communities that make up South Oakland County for more than 100 years.

We've hosted two highly successful "Paint the Town Royal Oak" sessions, during which aspiring and experienced watercolorists painted pictures of historic Royal Oak buildings. The paintings will be displayed at Royal Oak City Hall in the future. We're considering hosting another session in the winter.

Royal Oak Historical Society board member Marcy Dwyer will host the "Royal Oak Pioneer Cemetery Tour" from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, October 3, at the cemetery. This is a great opportunity for families to explore the rich history of Oakland County's oldest integrated cemetery. Call the museum to sign up for the tour.

THE SOUTH OAKLAND ART ASSOCIATION'S annual "Art at the Museum" will open November 8 and run through November 21. Members will display their art in this juried exhibition and offer it for sale to the public.

In December, Santa Claus is planning his annual visit at the museum! Check our website for the date.

If you ordered a centennial certificate for your 100-year-old home, please stop in the museum to pick it up! See Page 13 for details. 🍂



HOW TO DONATE ITEMS TO THE MUSEUM

The Royal Oak Historical Society welcomes inquiries from individuals who may have artifacts, photographs, documents, archives, or other historical materials related to Royal Oak. Go to our website and access the Artifact Donation Inquiry form: <https://royaloakhistoricalsociety.com/artifact-donation-inquiry>.

The form asks you to provide any known history or provenance. Submitting the form does not guarantee that the item will be accepted. Our curator will review the information and contact you.

Helpful information includes who owned the item, how it was used, where it came from, approximate dates, and how it is connected to Royal Oak. We do not accept furniture, appliances, dishes, clothing, or holiday decorations.

Please do not drop off items at the museum without first contacting the curator, Johanna Schurrer, at 248-439-1501.

From Our Collections

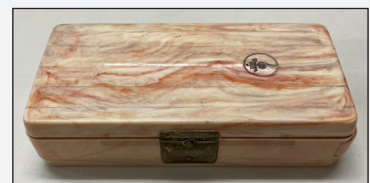
Emerson Portable Radio

This Emerson Model 640, vintage battery-powered portable tube radio, was produced by the Emerson Radio and Phonograph Corp. around 1949–1950.

Here are some fun facts about the Emerson Model 640:

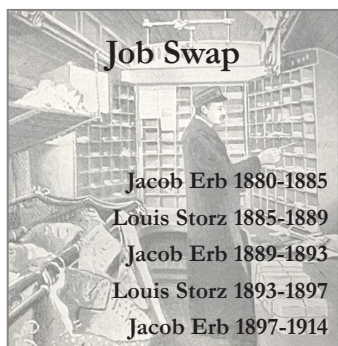
- Portable? Only when compared to the giant wooden living room consoles of the 1940s. The heavy vacuum tubes, thick plastic cabinet, and massive internal batteries made it feel like carrying a heavy brick.
- The swirled, marbled texture is meant to mimic high-end materials like expensive stone, exotic tortoise shell, or premium alligator leather. The manufacturer created it by mixing contrasting-colored plastics during the molding process.
- The required high-voltage 67.5V "B" battery was proprietary and pricey, costing a significant fraction of the radio's price.
- Look closely at the lid hinges: opening the top lid flips a mechanical microswitch inside that wakes up the vacuum tubes. Closing the lid instantly cuts the power off.
- The lid hinges hid the dial from view when off, creating the look of a seamless, discreet piece of luggage.

— Sharon McMurray



STAGECOACHES BEGAN regularly carrying mail and passengers along the plank road connecting Royal Oak to Rochester. After a time, George Hickey, an independent mail carrier, began delivering mail three times a week along Niles Road (now Main Street) from Royal Oak to Troy Corners (Big Beaver and Rochester roads). Some people built hinged mailboxes, nailed them to a fence, and hired Hickey to deliver mail directly to their homes. This predated Rural Free Delivery by 40 years. It was not a service everyone could afford; many still had to make the trek to the post office to pick up their mail.

There have been 43 postmasters in Royal Oak since 1825. Until recently, they served just a few years each. Back then, the job was never a full-time position. From 1849 to 1843, the town doctor, Flemon Drake, served his patients and the Royal Oak mail at the same time.



Among the most notable changes in postmasters were between Jacob Erb and Louis Storz. Erb's new store stood on the southeast corner of Main and Third streets (where Metals In Time is today). Louis Storz's store stood on the northeast corner of Main and Fifth streets. Jacob was an ardent Republican, and Louis was an ardent Democrat. The postmaster had always been a contentious political choice in Royal Oak. The party that ran the county always chose the Royal Oak postmaster and, in turn, the postmaster's location — in this case, two blocks in either direction. See the box at left for the breakdown of these two postmasters over the 24 years between 1880 and 1914.

Many in the village reportedly enjoyed this political spectacle.

By 1914, the postal business had grown so much that a separate building was rented next to Erb's store at 209 South Main, with Charles A. Allen serving as postmaster. Allen had previously served as village president. In the next few years, streets were permanently named, and

houses were required to display numbers so postal workers could make deliveries beginning on November 8, 1915. But much of the area was still "rural," so deliveries to some Royal Oak residents were made by horse-drawn buggy and/or motorized bicycle. As the city grew, Royal Oak Rural Free Delivery was eventually phased out.

THE ROYAL OAK POST OFFICE moved again in 1916 to the newly constructed three-story Royal Oak Savings Bank Building on the northwest corner of Main and Fourth streets. As reported in the May 17, 1918, *Royal Oak Tribune*: "Royal Oak will have city mail delivery after July 1, and after that date the government employees who deliver your letters will come to the door in dignified uniforms. All carriers will be under civil service, and they will receive \$880 a year with gradual increases in salary. Their pay is now only \$55 a month, and Postmaster Charles Allen found it impossible to retain them on this pay. He now has a lady carrier, Mildred Parady, who began work Monday morning."

Until then, mail delivery had been strictly a male domain. A second female carrier, Cora Baker, was added later. With free city mail delivery and the growth of the city's population, the volume of daily mail to be processed and delivered increased significantly. Mail began to be delivered twice a day, in the morning and afternoon. The Royal Oak Post Office became overwhelmed by this growth. On February 15, 1920, it became a branch of the Detroit Post Office. Six city carriers, making two deliveries a day, took over the work of three carriers making one delivery a day. Salaries rose to \$1,200 a year to start. Pleasant Ridge and Ferndale began to be covered by rural and foot carriers from the Royal Oak office.



Daily Tribune photo

Edward Eseman, a veteran carrier at the Royal Oak post office, started delivering mail in the spring of 1916.

August 3, 1936

Veteran Letter Carrier Recalls City's Growth

There is one man in Royal Oak who has literally watched it grow up day by day from a "one-horse village" to a thriving city as he makes his daily rounds.

He is Edward Eseman, veteran carrier of the Royal Oak post office, who started back in the spring of 1916 carrying letters on a rural route that began at Lafayette and Lincoln avenues and extended through the sparsely settled farm area of Pleasant Ridge, Clawson, and Berkley.

Eseman's route in those days went from the Nine-Mile Road to the Fourteen-Mile Road, and it took him four hours to cover the entire territory. He had just four stops in Berkley.

There were three carriers at the local post office when Eseman started his long career at age 19. In 1917 he left off carrying letters long enough to serve Uncle Sam in another quarter, the Army. Again in 1919, he returned to the Royal Oak post office, where he did clerk duty for a year before returning to the carrier's job.

When the Detroit Post Office took over Royal Oak in 1920, Eseman was given a contract route, which he has retained to the present time under local management.

The oldest Royal Oak employee in the point of service, Eseman recalls the days when he made his daily rounds on Route 2 over dirt roads through fields of grain. One of the dirt roads which he traveled frequently was Woodward Avenue. Although some employees at the local office served the postal department before Eseman, the veteran carrier is the sole remaining carrier from Royal Oak on the original staff.

He was born July 24, 1896, on Crooks Road, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Eseman. His parents now live at 131 Oak Street, Royal Oak. Eseman is married and has two children, 14 and 15 years of age. His home is at 713 Maxwell Avenue.



Daily Tribune photo

Despite poor weather, a good-sized crowd gathered on August 29, 1936, for the dedication of Royal Oak's new (and current) post office.

substations went into service; one at Ten Mile Road and Woodward Avenue, and the other at Catalpa/Gardenia and Main streets. Both substations were located in drug stores.

But even with Royal Oak being a branch of the Detroit Post Office, mail service bogged down again. In 1927, Royal Oak asked to again be its own separate postal unit. In 1931, after 11 years as a branch of the Detroit operation, the moniker "the Royal Oak Post Office" was revived. Still, the problems of a growing population remained. The main post office was then located at Fourth and Williams streets, and the number of people served had multiplied sixfold since 1920. It was time again for a new building.

Additionally, in the 1930s, the Shrine of the Little Flower became a major hub for mail because of the massive popularity of Father Charles Coughlin, whose sermons drew up to 30 million listeners each week. Correspondence averaging 80,000 letters per week led the U.S. Post Office to establish a functioning substation in the Shrine's basement. This dedicated mailing relationship ended abruptly in 1942, when the U.S. government suspended mailing privileges for Coughlin's newspaper, *Social Justice*, under the Espionage Act due to his controversial political rhetoric.

AFTER MUCH PETITIONING, the Public Works Administration allocated \$171,000 in 1933 for a new Royal Oak Post Office building. Preparations began immediately on the West Second Street site between Washington Avenue and Center Street. Noted architect Frederick D. Madison designed the building. Construction began on December 11, 1935. The finished building was dedicated August 29, 1936. The first mail delivery from the new location was made on September 14 of that year.

The current building has since been enlarged and modified several times. The entire block bounded by Second, Washington, First (now Eleven Mile), and Center streets now belongs to the federal government. Over the years, more than mail delivery has taken place in the new building.

In 1967, Royal Oak became the sectional center for area mail processing. It processed mail for a 2,400-square-mile area, serving the 60 offices that begin with the ZIP code 480. This mainly consisted of Oakland, Macomb, and St. Clair counties, with a population of more than 1.8 million. The mail-processing function grew to 2.5 million pieces of mail daily, requiring a separate mail-processing facility equipped with sophisticated, modern equipment. At times, it also housed Southeast Michigan District management departments, all with offices in the massive basement. Today, the basement is mostly vacant, and only city mail delivery personnel work there, as well as in the retail lobby.

THE CITIES SERVED by the Royal Oak Post Office have also changed. Royal Oak has an annex, actually located in Troy, that serves north Royal Oak and Madison Heights postal patrons. The "Main," as it is called by those who work there, serves south Royal Oak, Berkley, Pleasant Ridge, and Huntington Woods and remains the hub of postal services for all Royal Oak residents.

Unbeknownst to many, on December 21, 2000, the Royal Oak Post Office was renamed the William S. Broomfield Post Office Building to honor this long-serving U.S. Representative from the area and his legacy of public service. 🍂

John Dick was a Royal Oak city letter carrier for more than 20 years until his retirement from the Postal Service in January 2022. He remains an officer of the National Association of Letter Carriers at the state and local levels. He is also the treasurer and tour guide for the Michigan Labor History Society. He and his wife, Jackie (also a retired Royal Oak letter carrier), reside in Royal Oak. An article by the late John A. Kuzema, a postal clerk, contributed to this report.

In 1923, Royal Oak officials reported better mail delivery as the result of instructions from John B. Stackpole, assistant superintendent of the division of mails in the Detroit post office, of which Royal Oak was a branch. The Chamber of Commerce helped encourage residents to assist the postal force in achieving prompt mail delivery. Stackpole suggested the following: Use the full address, street and number. He said Royal Oak is no longer a village where the postmaster can remember where every person lives.

THE OUTLYING DISTRICTS would get better delivery service once sidewalks were installed. Postal regulations forbade foot delivery on streets without sidewalks or on streets that could be reached by sidewalks on other streets. Stackpole told residents to put the number of their house where the carrier could see it.

By 1926, the Royal Oak branch of the Detroit Post Office expanded to include mail delivery to Berkley and to most residents of Hazel Park. That same year, two postal

Shooting at the Royal Oak Post Office

Tragedy occurred at the Royal Oak Post Office on November 14, 1991. Thomas Paul McIlvane, a 31-year-old former letter carrier who was recently suspended from his job, entered an open door on the loading dock at around 8:45 a.m. with a rifle. He shot and killed four employees, wounded four others, and then fatally shot himself.

The victims were: Mary Ellen Benincasa, 32, of Clinton Township; Christopher Carlisle, 33, of Rochester Hills; Keith Ciszewski, 37, of Livonia, and Rose Marie Proos, 33, of Sterling Heights.

The shootings were the fifth shooting incident at post offices nationwide over a six-year period. Unfortunately, the Royal Oak shootings created the expression "going postal."

Congress investigated the shootings and described the Royal Oak Post Office as a "powder keg" waiting to blow due to management's intimidation tactics against its employees. In his book *The Tainted Eagle*, letter carrier Charlie Withers wrote: "The environment was so tense, it is hard to describe the hatred that was felt against management due to the way they mentally bullied the workforce."

In May 1993, it was reported that, after the shootings, the Postal Service eliminated the management at the Royal Oak post office.

Our Royal Oak Historical Society Members

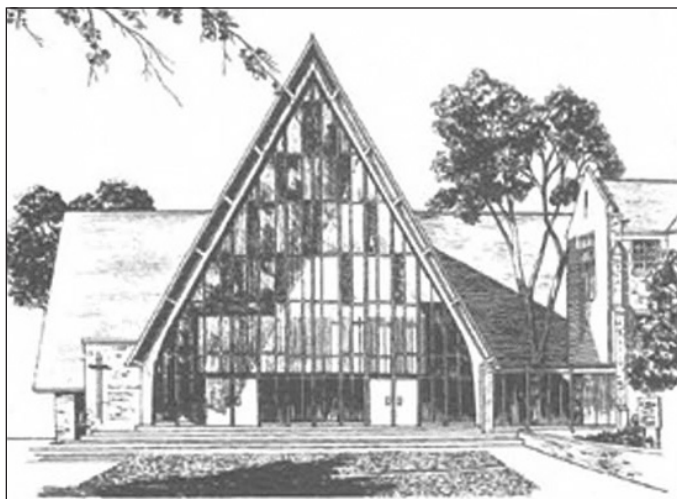
We thank the following members for their support of the Royal Oak Historical Society and the museum.
To continue our efforts to preserve our city's history, please see the back page of the newsletter or visit royaloakhistoricalsociety.com to learn how to join.

Virginia Abramson
Luann Adams
Bruce Allen
Deb & James Anderson
Robert Anderson
Andrew & Katie Androff
Frank & Carol Arvan
David Barnett
Rebekah Barr
Mary & Greg Baughman
Joanna Becker
Marilyn Begeny
Mary & Mark Benvenuto
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Joseph Crawford
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Judy & John Davids
Dylan Davids
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Susan & George Frentz
Carolyn Gabler
Brad Gabler
Patrick & Serene Gagniuk
Lorrie Gelenger
Leonardo Gianola
Richard Gillam

Marilyn & Joe Grazioli
Nancy Greenia
Noah Greenia
Jan Grudzen
Jeffery Hailer
Carol Hanchett-Card
Kathy & Peter Hart
Mary Hatala
Josh Hautamaki
Nancy Hemmila
Becky Hetchler
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Anne Hoyt
Karen Jones
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Bob Kelly
Rob King
Elizabeth Koledo
Dena Kolodziejski
Jill Kosters
Jonah Kubicek
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Zenon Kuszczak
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Joan Larson
Patricia Layman
Deborah Lee
Paul Leonard
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Jim McMurdo
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Susanne Monica
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William Newman
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Oakley Orser
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Sue Overall
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Steven Philips
John Pomroy
Lee Potter
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David Richards
Peggy Ridgway
Gwen Ross
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Douglas Ryan
Rick & Maureen Sage
Allen Salyer
Barry & Edie Saunders
Savka Family
Theresa Scherwitz
Joann & Walter Schirmacher
Robert Schneider
Felix Schneider
Matthew Schomer
John S. & Deb Schultz
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Rose Slovick
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Rick Smith
Wesley Smith
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Patt Trama
Brian Unsworth
John Viviano
Janet & J. Kurt Von Eberstein
Libby Walker
Patrice & Kevin Walsh
Susan & Mark Walton
Janis Watkins
Michelle Watson
Emily Weeks
Michael Whims
Randall Whyte
Ann Williams & Frank Edwards
Tina Wong
Julianna Wostyn
Maribeth Yamin
Janie Yurich
Scott Zimmerman

Thank You!



In 1926, St. John's took a prominent place on Woodward Avenue at Eleven Mile Road with the Gothic-style parish house shown to the right in the above sketch. The contemporary church was dedicated in 1958.



In August 1915, St. John's Episcopal mission church held the opening service in the sanctuary of the first building it owned, located on Fifth Street between Williams and Troy streets.

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH MARKS 100TH ANNIVERSARY

BY ELLEN ESKOLA KEHOE WITH MARY TIMMONS FAIRMAN

AS THE VILLAGE OF ROYAL OAK grew, so did the number of houses of worship. Among them was St. John's Episcopal Church, which held its first services in 1902 at the home of Captain Gorges and Mary Ann Parr. The services were led by the Rev. W.S. Watson, the rector of St. James Episcopal Church in Birmingham.

The services were then relocated to the basement of a former Royal Oak school building at Fourth and Williams Street, owned by the Parrs, who had remodeled it into a social hall called San Sara Hall. The church held services on Sunday afternoons to accommodate Rev. Watson, who held services at his home church in Birmingham on Sunday mornings.

The mission parish of St. John's originally consisted of the families of the Parrs, Julius Neff, and J. Patterson. The J. Patterson family later moved from the Royal Oak area.

Captain and Mrs. Parr were from Belfast, Ireland, and came to the United States in 1888 with two of their eventual nine children. Parr was a sea captain by profession. He had two children with his first wife and seven with Mary Ann. Mary Ann appears to have had a solid financial foundation. She owned several properties and was self-sufficient. Of her seven children, at least five attended college. This was somewhat unusual in Michigan in the early 1920s.

Julius and Kate Schlag Neff were German immigrants who lived in Royal Oak from 1908 to 1955. Julius is listed as a railroad foreman on the interurban at the time of his death in 1923. Kate Neff lived at 404 North Main until her death in 1955. The Neffs had four sons and one daughter. Family members of the Parrs and Neffs are buried in Royal Oak Cemetery.



The first services of St. John's Episcopal mission were held in 1902 in the home of Captain Gorges and Mary Ann Parr. Mary Ann Parr is seated, second from right, with her living children in 1910. Her husband is not in the photograph.

FROM 1906 TO 1911, the St. John's Mission was served by the Rev. H.H. Fox, rector of All Saints Episcopal Church in Pontiac. He traveled by the interurban and by horse and carriage from Pontiac to Birmingham, where he also served St. James Episcopal Church, and then to Royal Oak, all on Sunday.

Gorges Parr died in 1910, and Mary Ann Parr sold the San Sara Hall to the new Masonic Lodge for use as its temple. In 1911, the St. John's Mission folded. The Rev. Fox later wrote in a book on the history of the Episcopal Church in Oakland County: "At Royal Oak, for a number of years, services have been held regularly, but owing to the lack of an adequate place, they were finally given up. Steps have been taken, however, to revive this mission and put up a church. The village is growing so rapidly that this must soon be done."

In June 1914, St. John's Mission was reorganized by the Rev. F.F. Kraft, rector of St. James Episcopal in Birmingham. Kraft submitted the first report to the diocese in 1915. According to Richard Leslie, former historian for St. John's, this is the earliest historical record of St. John's. Between June 1914 and April 1915, the parish had 40 families. Services were

Continued on Page 8

St. John's • Continued from Page 7

once again held in the basement of the former San Sara Hall, now the Masonic Temple, at 4 p.m. on Sundays.

The St. John's congregation acquired its own building in May 1915 when the City of Royal Oak offered to sell the original Royal Oak Township Hall, built in 1870, for \$300. The building was a two-story wood-frame structure and had to be moved from its location at Main and Fourth Streets.

MRS. PARR OFFERED to lease a lot she owned on Fifth Street between Williams and Troy to St. John's for three years at \$1; therefore, the mission church decided to buy the Royal Oak Township Hall and move it to the lot on Fifth Street. The first service was held in the new St. John's Chapel in August 1915. This was the first building owned by the congregation.

As the St. John's mission church grew, it established Sunday school classes, youth groups, a choir, and an altar guild, known as the sanctuary department. A men's club and a ladies' guild followed. Confirmation classes were held for the first time.

The diocesan report by Rev. Kraft on April 30, 1916, reported that parish membership was still 40 families. In the previous year, six baptisms were performed, including five infants and one adult. There were 65 public services performed, and 16 Holy Communion services. Sunday School had 50 scholars, with nine teachers and officers. Total receipts for the year were \$699.25. The Sunday School contributed \$11.16 toward domestic and foreign work.

On April 20, 1917, St. John's Mission ran an advertisement in the *Royal Oak Tribune* seeking to purchase a bigger lot for a permanent placement of the Chapel: "WANTED: A lot, at least 100 feet front, for church purposes. Submit bid to the Episcopal Mission. R.W. Symes, secretary. R.F.D.2."

The lot at the southwest corner of Center and Seventh streets was purchased by the St. John's mission for \$3,000 in July 1917. The former Royal Oak Township Hall, now St. John's Chapel, was again moved, to the purchased lot at Center and Seventh.

"PARISHIONERS GATHERED together, with horses and sleds, and moved the building," reported the *Tribune* on October 12, 1917. Neighborhood lumber yards donated plaster, lumber, and shingles. The parish men provided the labor. The diocese donated \$300 to the move. The article further stated: "The intent is to continue using the building on the new location until a sufficient fund has been raised to build an Episcopal church worthy of the community."

In 1919, church member James H. McDonald facilitated the \$5,000 purchase of a house at 1203 South Washington Avenue to serve as a future rectory. The church was to reimburse McDonald on a payment plan. In May 1920, St. John's Mission became St. John's Church, "admitted into the union with conventions as a Full Parish Church," and in August 1920, the Rev. William R. Blachford became the first full-time rector and took up residence at the home on South Washington.

During this time, there were also changes going on in Royal Oak and the surrounding area. The population of Royal Oak almost tripled from 1910 to 1915, to 2,910 residents. In July 1921, Royal Oak was incorporated as a city, with a population of 6,000. In the fall of 1921, Blachford reported that 100 church high school students attended St. John's, and 50 new families had joined the church in the past year. Nearly 150 were attending Sunday services, with up to 225 people on Easter Sunday.



St. John's rector the Rev. W.R. Blachford is shown turning a shovel at the groundbreaking ceremony for the parish house on May 31, 1925.



The groundbreaking for the Gothic-styled parish house was held on May 31, 1925, and the building was completed in May 1926. It was the first permanent building for St. John's Church. In 1957, an A-framed contemporary church would be constructed closer to Woodward Avenue, connected to the older building at the stairway entrance shown on the left.

By September 1922, St. John's began raising money to build a new and larger church. The *Tribune* announced a benefit performance by the J.L. Hudson Concert Band at the Baldwin Theatre on September 12, 1922.

On March 23, 1923, the *Tribune* reported the church's vote to "purchase the one and a quarter acre lot on the south-east corner of First Street [Eleven Mile Road] and Woodward Avenue, offered by the Hendrie Estate for \$10,000." No immediate plans for a new church were told.

WITH THE LAND PURCHASE, the St. John's congregation was staking a prominent position along the Woodward Avenue corridor, which by 1924 would be widened all the way from Eight Mile Road to Pontiac. St. John's gave up a strip of land along the avenue as part of the Woodward widening; the church received three lots on the east side of the Hendrie property in exchange.

The land in the area of present-day Woodward and Eleven Mile was surveyed by Joseph Wampler in March 1817, who noted: "Brushy, swampy ground too deep with water to go on. Cranberry marsh." Church records reference the labor needed to clear the land. "It will be when Mr. McDonald and ninety-nine male assistants get to work on Saturdays with saws, axes, and rakes in hand."

The groundbreaking ceremony was held on May 31, 1925. The planned structure was called a parish house, defined as "a secondary building used by a church for community gatherings, offices, and classes; it stands near the main church building." It was planned to add the formal church at a later time on the northern part of the property.

The *Royal Oak Tribune* on May 28, 1925, stated, "The parish house will contain three floors. An auditorium and five class rooms all of which may be thrown into one and will seat 500 persons, will be located on the ground [main] floor, together with the chancel and two vesting rooms. In the basement will be a spacious dining room and kitchen, check rooms, men's lounging room and women's vestibule. The second floor will contain a large recreation hall with a stage, two vesting rooms and double social rooms."

DETROIT ARCHITECT H. Augustus O'Dell designed the parish house (a number of years before his brief partnership with Wirt Rowland), and it was finished in May 1926, finally giving St. John's its own permanent building. The total cost was \$65,000; the mortgage was \$50,000, with payments of \$1,500 plus interest due every six months.

The Salvation Army moved into the former township hall/St. John's chapel in May 1926 and bought the property from St. John's Episcopal Church for \$16,000.

With Rev. William Blachford having moved on to a church in Wayne, Michigan, St. John's called the Rev. Charles C. Jatho as its next rector in June 1929. *The Daily Tribune's* article on June 14, 1929, detailed Jatho's previous assignments in Massachusetts and Ohio, as well as his "most novel preaching experience ... when he acted as chaplain during the World War [WWI] in a German prison camp," where he was confined after being taken prisoner while serving as an ambulance driver in the French army. Jatho's family included his wife, Margaret, son Welles, and daughter Desier.

After the stock market crash in October 1929, the Great Depression threatened the church building and property. Many of the parishioners' incomes were severely reduced or lost due to joblessness.

In 1934, St. John's Episcopal Church was serving 497 families. There were 823 church school pupils, teachers, and officers. Church attendance suffered during the World War II years due to parishioners working longer hours, serving in the armed forces, and because of gas rationing. Yet St. John's persevered.

On May 19, 1944, Jatho led the congregation in a mortgage-burning event. On that same day, he shared his vision for a larger, new Gothic church building to match the style of the original parish house built in 1926. However, a more immediate need was a new education wing, which opened in May 1952 to house the rapidly expanding church school. Today, this addition includes the library, community room, cry room, and gathering rooms.

DURING THE 1950S, St. John's assisted other Episcopal church missions in Oakland County, including St. Andrew's in Clawson, St. Margaret's in Hazel Park, and St. Patrick's in Madison Heights.

By 1956, the cost for the envisioned Gothic-style stone and brick building had become prohibitive. The design shifted to the modern A-frame building where the congregation worships today. The estimated cost was \$562,000. More than 800 individuals and families pledged \$325,000 during the September 1956 fundraising campaign.

The parish retained H. Augustus O'Dell's subsequent firm, O'Dell, Hewlett & Luckenbach, to design the larger, modern sanctuary. The firm had designed the Henry and Edsel Ford Auditorium in Detroit and Clarence M. Kimball High School in Royal Oak, and later the Oakland County Courthouse and Pontiac Silverdome.

The church was to go on the northwest portion of the site, and it would connect to the current building by enclosed corridors. It would seat 754, with space for the choir, a shrine, and a gallery.

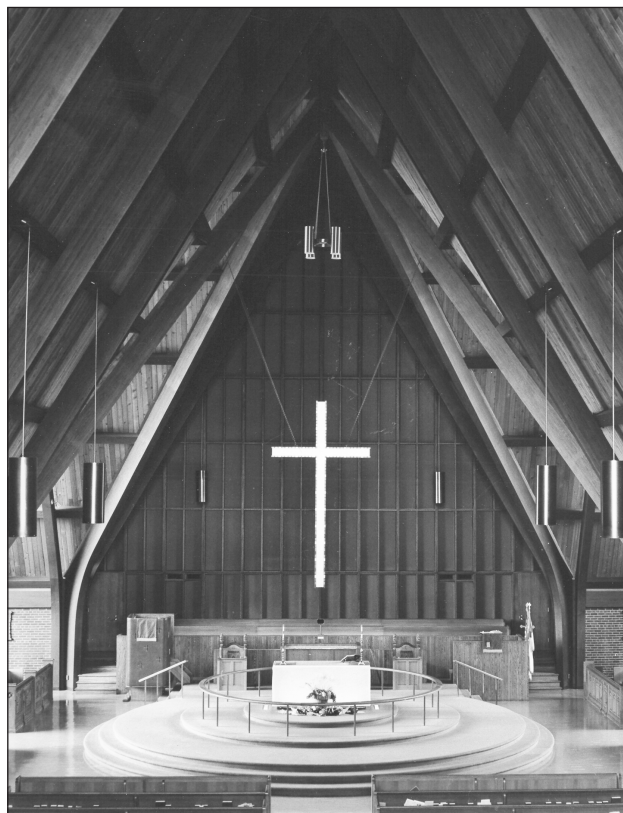
The distinctive A-frame glue-laminated timber (shortened to glulam) construction was very popular for contemporary church design at that time. It has been estimated that 75% of new churches built in the United States in the late 1950s used glulam; part of its appeal was the relative efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the prefabricated arches. It is believed that glulam technology was invented in England in the 19th century, but in the 1950s it was relatively new to United States.

MOST EXAMPLES of this structural type are simple, center-aisle naves. St. John's, which features a center aisle, two side aisles, short cruciform transepts, and a central altar "in the round" (considered nonhierarchical and welcoming), is an unusual and particularly large example of this iconic 1950s style.

Continued on Page 10



The Rev. Charles C. Jatho began as the St. John's rector in June 1929. He retired in January 1960 after serving the congregation for more than 30 years. He passed away in 1969.



Prefabricated glulam arches soar skyward in the St. John's sanctuary. The pulpit, to the back and left of the altar, has since been moved forward.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the new church was on May 25, 1957. The roof "vaults toward the heavens," declared *The Daily Tribune* before the dedication ceremony September 7, 1958. The former sanctuary in the original parish house has over the years housed several major outreach programs at St. John's and is currently home to the New To You resale shop.

HISTORIC STAINED-GLASS windows from the original sanctuary — created by the renowned Willet Hauser studio of Philadelphia and installed beginning in 1943 as memorial donations — were intentionally integrated into the new architecture. These original windows appear in the narthex, the east transept, and the large A-frame glass facades. They are listed on the Michigan Stained Glass Census (michiganstainedglass.org).

The Rev. Charles Jatho announced his retirement in January 1960, after serving as rector of St. John's for more than 30 years. He was then a chaplain at William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak until his death in 1969.

In an article about his retirement in *The Daily Tribune* on August 20, 1960, Jatho recalled the early years of his ministry, which were during the Great Depression. "Royal Oak clergy joined to set up soup kitchens which delivered at least one hot meal a day and free milk to hundreds of families. The churches took turns by weeks on the deliveries," he said. "Every child got one pint of milk every day. We also took care of the needs of around 5,000 people for shoes and rubbers. ... People now have no realization of what it's like to simply have no money, none at all."

Subsequent rectors of St. John's have included the Revs. John Shufelt (1960–1969), John Albrecht (1969–1973), Robert Eidson (1973–1991), David Moore (1991–1995), Linda Northcraft (1997–2012), and Beth Taylor (2014–2025).

In 1967, Martha C. Pray joined the St. John's staff as Christian education director. She continued in the role until her retirement in May 1976. In an article in the *Tribune* on May 22, 1976, Pray reflected that she strived to keep abreast of changing times and create programs relevant to the lifestyles of parishioners, both young and old. At St. John's, she was also the first woman chalice bearer, the lay minister who passes the cup during communion, "a sign of the Episcopal Church's awareness of the need for participation by everyone."

A GROUP OF ENTERPRISING parishioners began to hold a large antique show and sale in the downstairs Jatho Hall, starting in February 1964. Admission was charged to peruse the booths of numerous antique vendors, and the church offered home-cooked lunch and dinner. This fundraiser was enormously successful and held annually until 2008.

For many years, the Royal Oak Historical Society's annual dinner was held at St. John's, at its peak attracting more than 600 attendees. The women and men of the church who cooked and served the customary Swiss steak dinner were known to call the event, tongue in cheek, the "Hysterical Dinner" because of the number of guests.

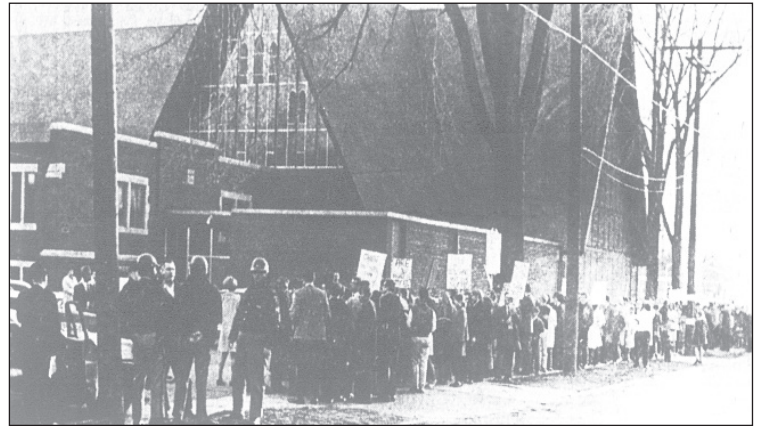
During Rev. Eidson's tenure, the parish focused on issues of peace, justice, and the environment. In 1984, the national Episcopal church honored St. John's as a Jubilee Center in recognition of the church's many outreach ministries. The New To You Resale Shop was founded in October 1980, and the Open Hands Food Pantry, begun in February 1982, is "St. John's largest direct ministry to those in need." It is open two Saturday mornings a month and feeds more than 16,000 people facing food insecurity each year. The Open Hands Garden provides fresh produce for Open Hands.

IN MARCH 1988, a new organ was installed — a 41-rank, 3-manual Schantz pipe organ. This instrument has enhanced the worship life of the congregation and is given scrupulous care. A three-story elevator tower to link the original building and the sanctuary addition was installed in 1993, with careful consideration of the architecture of the existing buildings. An accessibility ramp was also added to the Woodward side of the church.

The Rev. Linda Northcraft became the rector at St. John's Episcopal Church in September 1997. A *Detroit Free Press* article on October 4, 1997, reported, "Some of the congregation's 300 members have departed after learning that Rev. Northcraft is a lesbian. Others are wrestling with an issue that has divided major Christian denominations in the last decade: Can gays and lesbians serve in the pulpit of a church?" Northcraft was quoted in the article, saying: "It is my opinion that all the instruction in the world changes very little. What changes people is when they see you at work. No one ever asked me when they were dying what my sexual orientation was."

The Rev. Beth Taylor continued the successful outreach ministries that are so important to the congregation. She retired and moved to Colorado, and currently the Rev. Maryjane Peck is the interim rector during the search for a new rector.

After 100 years, the landmark of St. John's Episcopal Church at Eleven Mile and Woodward continues its long tradition of commitment to social justice, outreach, diversity, inclusion, and positive change in the world. This milestone will be celebrated at the church with a worship service at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday, October 18. 🌿



Daily Tribune photo by Richard A. Hunt

An interfaith service at St. John's on April 8, 1968, days after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., ended with a silent 200-person march toward Royal Oak City Hall. The march, however, violated an emergency statewide prohibition on assemblies of more than three persons and was stopped by police. One hundred eight adults and 23 juveniles were arrested.

Royal Oak Then & Now

BY JOHN MAURICE

Then 1956



The first Chicken Shack location at 1320 East Eleven Mile Road in Royal Oak opened on June 6, 1956, after only 41 days of construction.

ONE OF ROYAL OAK'S longest-standing restaurants is Chicken Shack, which opened 70 years ago in 1956. The founders, John and Lola Sobeck, had launched their first food venture a decade earlier, when the newly married couple opened J & J Ice Cream. But it wouldn't take long for chicken, specifically broasted chicken, to become their trademark success story.

The first Chicken Shack location opened at 1320 East Eleven Mile Road on June 6, 1956, after only 41 days of construction. The signature four-piece chicken dinner (which included a breast, wing, leg, and thigh, along with potatoes) was priced at \$1.45.

AS THE INITIAL LOCATION exploded in popularity, it wasn't long before the more recognized Woodward location opened to keep up with

demand. The Woodward location proved pivotal in the brand's development. Near that location was a restaurant called the Hideout, owned by Bill Herman. It turned out that Bill was a dealer for chicken broasting equipment in the area at that time.

ONE TASTE of that broasted chicken was all it took for John to become fascinated with the pressure-frying process that produces a juicy, flavorful chicken unlike anything else. John said it was the best fried chicken he'd ever tasted. From there, John created his own recipes, including spices for the marinade and the sauces. From its earliest days, Chicken Shack has used only fresh, never-frozen chicken in its recipes. In 1981, Shack Potatoes were added to the menu.

By 1976, John had refined the proprietary recipes that still define the Shack today. From the two original Royal Oak locations, Chicken Shack became a local favorite across southeast Michigan. As its popularity grew, the company began franchising. Since opening its first franchise in Warren in 1985, the company has grown to more than 20 locations. In 1990, the company fulfilled a record-breaking single order of 11,400 pieces of chicken to go.

UNLIKE MANY FAMILY businesses that started from such humble beginnings, Chicken Shack, now known as Detroit's Original Chicken Shack, has welcomed each new generation into the business and remained family-run through four generations. They always believed in family first. John Sobeck died in 2016 at age 92. Lola is now 98 and still stops into the Woodward location.

The original Eleven Mile building was replaced in 2000, and a new headquarters opened in Warren in 2020. But the Royal Oak legacy established by John and Lola Sobeck remains strong more than 70 years later. 🍗

1956 THEN photo courtesy of The Detroit News.

1971 THEN photo courtesy of the Royal Oak Historical Society.

NOW photo by John Maurice.

Then 1971



The Eleven Mile location as it looked in 1971.

Now



The original Eleven Mile location was replaced in 2000.

The Olympia Confectionery — Royal Oak's First Candy and Ice Cream Store

By Don Callihan



Above: Olympia Candies on the north side of Fourth Street, just west of Main.

Right: the store's charming interior.



AS THE VILLAGE OF ROYAL OAK began to develop and grow in the 1920s, with department stores, churches, and schools, Olympia Confectionery opened in February 1921 and soon became a popular spot for kids and adults alike for its homemade ice cream and candies.

The store on Fourth Street, between Main and Center, was owned by Emmanuel John Bashakes, a Greek immigrant born in Molia, Greece, on September 18, 1885. His story began when he arrived in New York City in 1899 at age 14, found employment, and stayed for three years. Then friends who had settled in Marlette, in Michigan's Thumb, invited him to visit.

He liked the slower pace in Marlette and decided to stay. He took a job as a candy maker in a confectionery store for \$75 a year plus room and board. The work was intense, and he frequently worked 24-hour shifts. His efforts paid off as he not only earned money but also learned the candy business. With limited opportunities in Marlette, he moved to Detroit in 1915 and became a waiter at the newly opened Hotel Statler.

AFTER A FEW YEARS at the Statler, Bashakes moved to Royal Oak to open his own business. On February 18, 1921, the day before the store's opening, the *Royal Oak Tribune* carried an advertisement announcing the grand opening. The ad emphasized purity, sanitation, scientific methods, and the best ingredients.

When giving the store's location, it read "Old Post Office." This was because the Olympia Confectionery was located in the Royal Oak Savings Bank building, where the Royal Oak Post Office operated from 1916 until 1920 when it relocated to Fourth and Williams streets.

Another aspect of the first ad is the business

name, "Olibia Confectionery and Ice Cream Parlors." It is unclear why the name was incorrect, but the newspaper corrected it in the next issue, a week later. Another curious detail is the plural "Ice Cream Parlors." There was only one ice cream parlor, yet the plural appeared in subsequent ads. Perhaps the intent was to indicate plans for more stores in the future.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, as many small towns grew, nearly every populated area had a confectionery store for ice cream and candies of every kind, made on the premises. Many of these businesses were operated by Greek immigrants.

Greek-owned confectionery stores got their start in Chicago, where in 1873, Panagiotis Hatzideris, a Greek sailor, opened a candy shop. Like many early entrepreneurs, Hatzideris used family, his wife and children, as unpaid labor. As the business grew and he needed more help, he employed relatives and other newly arrived Greeks. As the newcomers learned the business, they left to start their own stores, and by 1908, there were 237 Greek-owned confectioneries in Chicago alone.

As the Chicago market was growing, Greek-owned confectionery businesses were opening across America.

CONFECTIONERY STORES required little capital to start. Equipment included a large double boiler to melt chocolate, a gas stove for heat, and a marble-topped table for tempering — the process of pouring the melted chocolate onto the table and then mixing and cooling it with a putty knife to stabilize the cocoa butter crystals, much as fudge makers do today on Mackinac Island. Molds were also needed to make hollow chocolate shells that could be filled with creams and other fillings.

Making ice cream did not require a large investment either. Commercial refrigerators and freezers for retail locations were unavailable, so ice cream had to be made the old-fashioned way, using a hand-cranked or motor-driven ice cream freezer that relied on crushed ice and salt to initiate freezing. Once the mixture reached the consistency of frozen custard, the ice cream freezer was disassembled, and the soft ice cream was transferred into metal ice cream cans to begin hardening. The cans were put in wooden tubs, and a mixture of crushed ice and rock salt was packed around them. The salt forced the ice to melt, lowering the surrounding temperature below water's freezing

FORMAL OPENING SATURDAY, FEB. 19.
FREE CARNATIONS
YOU'LL LIKE THIS
DELICIOUS HOME-MADE CANDY
AT THESE PRICES

Our Candy is absolutely pure, as it is made by experts in our sanitary work rooms. The most scientific methods are used and only the best materials go into our confections. Give us a trial and you will be convinced.

SPECIALS

Home made Taffy, pound	20c	Maple Walnut Fudge, pound	50c
Coconut Taffy, pound	30c	Caramels, Chocolate and Vanilla, pound	60c
Peanut Brittle, pound	20c	Coconut Fruit Nut Caramels, pound	50c
Vanilla Walnut French Chewing Taffy, pound	40c	Specials Assorted Chocolates, pound	45c
Claret Brindle, pound	50c		
Vanilla Walnut Fudge, pound	50c		

EVERYTHING HOME-MADE

**OLIBIA CONFECTIONERY
and ICE CREAM PARLORS**

110 W. Fourth Street. E. Bashakes, Prop. Old Post Office.

The opening day advertisement in the *Tribune* on February 18, 1921, had the name *Olympia* misspelled as *Olibia*. The paper corrected the error in the next week's issue.

14th Annual Art Show Opens November 7

For the past 14 years, the Royal Oak Historical Society Museum and the South Oakland Art Association have shared a partnership that celebrates both the arts and our local community. By opening its doors each fall to SOAA's Annual Art Show, the museum provides an exceptional venue where local artists can exhibit their work while welcoming new visitors to experience one of Royal Oak's most treasured historic spaces.



This year's "Art at the Museum" show and sale will run from Nov. 7 through Nov. 21, during regular museum hours: 1–4 p.m. Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. The public is invited to attend the free opening reception and awards ceremony from 2–5 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 8. Visitors will have the opportunity to meet the artists, view a wide variety of artwork in many different media, and celebrate the creativity that continues to thrive in our community.

Founded in 1960, the South Oakland Art Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting artists through exhibitions, educational programs, and community outreach. The organization brings together artists of all experience levels, fostering creativity, friendship, and lifelong learning while enriching the cultural life of southeast Michigan.



Celebrate Your 100-Year-Old Home

Is your home turning 100 years old this year, or is it older? You may request a Centennial Home Certificate to designate it as an official Centennial Home.

If you would like to order a free certificate, email your name and address to curatorrohs@gmail.com. Certificates will take about a month to print and may be picked up at the Museum on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from 1–4 p.m. Please call before coming to ensure it is ready.

You may also purchase a forged metal plaque that designates your home's centennial status and features the Royal Oak Historical Society seal. Each plaque costs \$180 and is available at the Museum and at Frenz Hardware. Proceeds support the society's preservation efforts and the Historical Society's Museum.



Owner Emmanuel John Bashakes came to the United States from Greece in 1899 when he was 14 years old.

point, typically between 0° F and –5° F. The wooden tubs were placed in an icebox (an insulated wooden cabinet with insulated doors but no refrigeration) to help keep the ice cream frozen. The tubs were regularly removed from the icebox to drain the meltwater from the bottom and add fresh ice and salt to keep the mixture frozen. It wasn't until the early 1950s that small commercial freezers became common.

In a 1921 ad, a quart of ice cream was 60 cents. Using today's standard 1.5-quart size, 1.5 quarts in 1921 would have cost 90 cents — adjusted for inflation about 90 x 18.6 = \$16.75. Brand-name ice cream now goes for about \$5, and such shops as Ray's Ice Cream on Coolidge in Royal Oak charge \$16 for half a gallon, or \$12 for 1.5 quarts. By that standard, the Olympia's ice cream was relatively expensive. During the Great Depression, a quart fell from 60 cents in 1921 to 35 cents in 1931.

BASHAKES WAS OBSESSED with cleanliness. His very first ad reads, "Our candy is absolutely pure as it is made by experts in our sanitary work rooms." On April 7, 1922, "Henry Dieterle, state food inspector ... has inspected the Olympia Confectionery and declared it to be way above the exacting standards of cleanliness and sanitary methods in candy making." And on January 19, 1923, "After a surprise inspection of the store and kitchen ... we were congratulated on the cleanliness of our place of business, and the inspectors pronounced it A-1 in every respect."

In 1922, Bashakes married Bertha Despinales. On January 11, 1924, Bertha gave birth to twin sons, Louis and John. They lived at 722 South West Street, within walking distance of

the store. This was important because, like Panagiotis Hatzideris and his Chicago confectionery, Bashakes relied on his wife and children for affordable labor.

In June 1923, Bashakes donated a 15-pound box of candy to Royal Oak High School seniors traveling to Washington, D.C., for their senior trip. This is known because one of the seniors sent a tongue-in-cheek thank-you note to the *Tribune*, which was published with an explanation on June 23, 1923. The note read, "The fifteen pounds of candy was fine. We nominate you, permanent chairman of our candy committee. WARREN G. HARDING White House." Bashakes also was known to donate candy and ice cream as prizes for contests and local events.

FOR SOME YEARS, the business faced little if any competition. That all changed in December 1935 when Fred Sanders opened a store in the Washington Square Building. The new shop featured a serpentine soda fountain with 53 seats, served lunches, and carried all of Sanders' ice cream, candy, and baked goods. The Olympia was certainly affected, but the store's reputation, loyal customers, and population growth in Royal Oak and surrounding areas allowed it to survive.

Bashakes made it through the remainder of the Great Depression, the war years, and the late 1940s, before retiring in 1951. His son, John, remodeled the facility and converted it into the Olympia Grill, which specialized in hamburgers, businessmen's lunches, and soda fountain treats. The restaurant opened on December 10, 1951.

Emmanuel John Bashakes died unexpectedly on August 28, 1953, at the age of 67. The Olympia Grill operated for another year but was sold by the family at the end of 1954. The Wish-Bone restaurant opened in its former quarters.

Little by little, the small, family-owned confectionery stores closed their doors as larger chains, such as Sanders, began to dominate the market. Although a few local operations, such as Ray's Ice Cream, remain, the golden age of homemade candies and ice cream had come to an end. 🍪

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 — 1976

ROYAL OAK RESIDENTS LIVING near Lockman Park pleaded with city officials Monday night to step up law enforcement against youth gangs who residents say make it impossible for them to use the park because of beer drinking and pot smoking activities. Residents also said the youths, ranging from age 9 to the mid-20s, use abusive language, destroy park property and equipment, and threaten residents who question their activities. "We're here on our hands and knees asking you to please do something. There are crime and criminal activities taking place at the park," said James T. Wainwright, 1300 Grove. "Youth gangs in Detroit are ruining that City. We don't want youth gangs ruining this town." City commissioners said they may act on a resolution next Monday calling upon state legislators to roll back the legal drinking age to 21.

"Area educators are saying it (the 18-year-old drinking age) is now a problem," said Commissioner Alice L. Schoenholtz.

MARK JOHNSON HAS RETURNED home to Royal Oak after completing a 3,500-mile bike ride that took him and two friends coast-to-coast through 11 states. Johnson, age 18, 443 Orchard View, along with Scott Ray, age 19, of Grand Rapids, and Doug Miner, age 19, of Canton, Ohio, began their trek across America June 14, in Astoria, Oregon, where they placed the back wheels of their bicycles in the Pacific Ocean. The adventure ended July 26, when the trio dipped the front wheels of their bikes in the Atlantic Ocean at Virginia Beach, Virginia. Plans for the trip began almost as a joke last December.

60 years ago — 1966

STATE SCHOOL OFFICIALS are expected to clamp tighter controls on spending of Federal school aid money for programs for underprivileged children in local school districts, and give local anti-poverty officials a policeman's role in making sure the money is spent for the poor, *The Daily Tribune* learned today (Aug. 1). The policeman's role, however, will not include veto power over local school programs. County anti-poverty chief James McNeely, who has been feuding with local school officials over spending of funds under President Johnson's 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, said state officials have agreed this money should be directed at the poor. This title calls for funds to support programs to upgrade culturally underprivileged children. About 52 million was spent alone last year in Oakland County's 29 school districts. McNeely said the law was intended to help poor children, but criticized local schoolmen for channeling funds into regular programs.

MILK PRICES ROSE more than 10 percent at some Detroit retail outlets today (Aug. 1). Borman Food Stores, operators of Food Fair supermarkets posted a price of 43 cents for a half gallon of homogenized milk. The prior price was 38.5 cents. The quart price was placed at 31 cents, an increase of three cents. Twin Pines Dairies, a home delivery company, increased its half gallon price from 50 cents to 54 cents and the quart price from 28 to 30 cents. Sealtest Dairies increased its half-gallon price from 52 cents to 58 cents and the quart price from 27.5 to 30.5 cents.

70 years ago — 1956

IN A LAST-MINUTE ATTEMPT to foil Royal Oak's stand on rezoning two Woodward lots to business, Huntington Woods will seek to annex the land. A special Woods commission meeting has been called to receive annexation petitions. The bid for annexation will be placed before the Royal Oak commission at its meeting later in the evening. The four Woodward lots at the northwest corner of Lincoln, were originally annexed to Royal Oak in 1950 by joint-resolutions of both commissions. Emma Doerr, owner of the two lots rezoned to business by Royal Oak, had sued Royal Oak to have the previous residential zoning lifted from her lots.

A joint resolution of both commissions, accompanied by the petitions, would be sufficient to give three of the four lots to Huntington Woods. Parts of the three are both in Huntington Woods and Royal Oak. The fourth lot is completely in Royal Oak. Residents would have to vote on its annexation.

80 years ago — 1946

THREE CASES OF INFANTILE PARALYSIS have been reported so far to the South Oakland health department. Four-year-old William Davis, Jr., of Hewitt Avenue, Royal Oak Township, is in the Children's Hospital in Detroit, suffering from poliomyelitis.

The illness of Marlene Kerby, age 14, of 150 East Oakridge Avenue, Ferndale, has also been diagnosed as infantile paralysis. Ronald Pank, age 3, of 23417 Hazelwood Avenue, Hazel Park, SOC's first polio case of the summer, is reported suffering from slight paralysis of the legs.

PLANS FOR THE ATHLETIC FIELDS at Royal Oak Memorial Park deviate only slightly from the original layout and will not prevent construction of an outdoor theater, a commission committee studying the situation declared. The 58-acre park site is being

developed to include a large, artificially lighted baseball diamond. Some members of the city's parks and playgrounds committee claim that the diamond, with adjacent bleachers, will encroach upon the small area left for landscaping and a proposed outdoor theater. The commission's committee members denied that noise from the athletic field or heavy parking along Woodward will interfere with programs in the outdoor theater.

90 years ago — 1936

A \$1,000,000 HOUSING PROJECT on the west side of Vinsetta Boulevard, north of Twelve-Mile road, to be known as Northwood Village, is being planned by Mayor H. Lloyd Clawson on a basis of FHA financing. Preliminary details of the plan were revealed last night (August 9) as the mayor asked the city commission for an expression of future assessing policies to give the FHA a means of determining the tax obligations of the property for the next several years.

The village, on unplatted land on which zoning restrictions recently were reduced to permit the development, will consist of 74 apartment buildings of from four to six families, providing housing facilities for 250 families, or 1,000 persons, the mayor said. Included in the village, which is adjacent to the Twelve-Mile Road Grand Trunk commuter stop, will be playgrounds and parks for use of tenants. The mayor said plans are being pushed so that construction can start in the fall.

PETER UNDERWOOD, AGE 22, pleaded guilty before Circuit Judge H. Russel Holland to grand larceny in connection with the theft of an \$800 diamond ring from his mother, Mrs. George Underwood, at 300 Maryland Avenue in Royal Oak. Underwood was charged by his father with taking the ring from a cedar chest while his parents were at a summer cottage and pawning it, receiving in trade a \$35 ring which he gave to a girl and \$20 in cash. The ring was located in a pawn shop. Underwood will be sentenced later.

100 years ago — 1926

THE RESIGNATION of Frank Cepluck, city constable, elected last fall for a term of two years, was accepted by the commission last night. Cepluck was recently convicted of driving while drunk and sentenced to a jail term. A. D. Neale, the other constable, has taken over the active duties. Whether another constable must or may be appointed will be reported to the commission next week by City Attorney W. C. Hudson. The failure of the city charter to specifically provide for the vacancy was termed "inconsistency No. 117" by Commissioner Alfred L. Fraser.

A RECORD-HIGH PRICE for a Royal Oak business property has been set in the sale of the Robert Nahrgang Jr. building at 316–318 South Main Street [currently Ale Mary's and Tom's Oyster Bar]. A. O. Greenough, Realtor, announced today (August 3) that James Noonan and George Bark, owners of the tailoring firm Noonan & Bark, have bought the two-story brick building with 40 feet of frontage and 110 feet of depth for \$71,500. The building is occupied by the Waldrop restaurant and Broomfield's menswear store on the ground floor, with offices on the second floor. It is across the street from Nahrgang Department Store, which is not involved in the sale. The purchasers bought the property as an investment and as a future site for their tailoring business.

OAK RIDGE SCHOOL STUDENTS will be under the supervision of Charles R. Starring as superintendent during the next school year, which begins Sept. 7. Approximately 600 students are expected. The \$60,000 addition, recently approved at a bond election, will be finished about Nov. 1. It will include high school and junior high assembly rooms and a domestic science room. Twenty-five teachers, besides the superintendent, will constitute the faculty. Of this number, 12 teachers are new. Miss Grace Wertenberger remains as principal of the school. Supt. Starring was a history and mathematics teacher at Oak Ridge High School last year. He holds a teacher's certificate from the Western State Normal College at Kalamazoo and a bachelor of arts degree from Columbia University. The new teachers are: Florence Bisson, language; Maxwell Hutchinson, history; Wilma Leising, music; Bess Van DerKar, domestic science; Jean McKnight, girl's gym; Neil Mast, mathematics; Rebecca Von Tick, eighth grade; Lucy Armstrong, fifth grade; Helen Pointen, third grade; Adelaide Pearson, second grade; Dorothy Hubbard, first grade; and Ardath Crouse, art. 🍎

90 Years Ago August 1, 1936



Everybody came out ahead on this playground event, when Washington Midgets and Juniors entertained Franklin's similar representatives at a weiner hot dog roast yesterday. Weiners, milk, soft drinks, and watermelon disappeared in great quantities. Mrs. Ida Smith was the hostess at Washington, with Miss Kathleen Parr, Franklin playground director, and Mrs. Bessie Smith, playground music teacher, as adult guests. This event was part of the Royal Oak Recreation Department summer program.



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Newsletter printed by: IMAGE PRINTING, 1902 Crooks Road, Royal Oak, MI 48073 • (248) 585-4080