



# ROYAL OAK *Historical Society*

MAY 2025 • ROYALOAKHISTORICALSOCIETY.COM

## Celebrating 100 Years of Royal Oak's 1925 Housing Boom

By Judy Davids and Don Drife

**ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO**, in 1925, the city of Royal Oak recorded 548 houses being built — a milestone in home construction that wouldn't be matched on this scale until the 1950s. It's a unique moment to celebrate these century-old homes this year and reflect on the remarkable transformation of Royal Oak from a quiet village into a thriving city in the 1920s.

The houses built in 1925 have witnessed a century of change, from Model T Fords rumbling down dirt roads to the modern bustle of Woodward Avenue. But how did Royal Oak go from a construction boom in 1925 to a near standstill just a decade later?

In 1921, Royal Oak officially became a city, setting the stage for rapid expansion. No longer just a sleepy stop along the road to Pontiac from Detroit, it had become a self-governing community with the power to shape its own future. As Detroit thrived in the wake of Henry Ford's automobile revolution, Royal Oak emerged as an ideal place for workers to settle — a close commute to factories yet offering a quieter, suburban lifestyle.

**AS AUTOMOBILES BECAME** the primary mode of transportation, the demand for paved roads grew. In 1925, Woodward Avenue was fully paved through Royal Oak, transforming it into a smooth, modern roadway. Royal Oak had 143 miles of streets, 35 miles of them paved. With easier access to Detroit, commuting became more convenient,



### BUNGALOWS GAIN POPULARITY

*The Kidder-Huebner house at 1028 Longfellow Avenue is among the many bungalow-style homes built in Royal Oak starting in the early 1920s. See Page 6 for more about this house and other popular home designs that appeared as the city grew.*

### 100-Year Homes Honored



The Royal Oak Historical Society is marking the milestone of the 548 houses built in 1925 with several ways for homeowners to commemorate their historic homes. Learn more on Page 8.

making Royal Oak even more appealing to homebuyers. Royal Oak was serviced by the Grand Trunk Railroad and the Detroit United Railways Pontiac, Almont, and Flint lines.

New businesses began springing up to support the growing population. On October 12, 1925, the last weekly editions of the *Royal Oak Tribune*, *Berkley Tribune*, *Clawson Tribune*, and *Hazel Park Tribune* made their last appearances, and *The Daily Tribune* began publishing, helping to shape the city's identity and keep the community informed on a daily basis. In 1927, the Washington Square Building was completed, marking the beginnings of a bustling downtown. The same year, the Royal Oak Farmers Market building opened, creating a hub for local agriculture and community gatherings. In 1928, the Detroit Zoological Park officially opened on August 1, quickly becoming a major regional attraction and firmly putting Royal Oak on the map.

**ROYAL OAK WAS** a Ford town. The *Royal Oak Tribune* from October 26, 1927, states, "Ford men living in Royal Oak number 2,402." The 1928 Polk's city directory for Royal Oak lists the population as 21,840. Eleven percent of the total population worked for the Ford Motor Company. If the average family was a husband, wife, and two kids, then one-quarter of

*Continued on Page 4*

ANNUAL MEMORIAL DAY PANCAKE BREAKFAST FUNDRAISER ■ MONDAY, MAY 26 ■ 7 – 11 A.M. ■ FARMERS MARKET

ROYAL OAK  
*Historical Society*

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ROYAL OAK  
*Historical Museum*

1411 West Webster Road  
Royal Oak, MI 48073

royaloakhistoricalsociety.com

(248) 439-1501

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

EXHIBIT THROUGH MAY

"A Tangled Web: African Americans in  
19th Century Royal Oak"

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

## President's Message

BY TOM TOGGWEILER

The Royal Oak Historical Society has been busy over the winter hosting exhibits about the Underground Railroad and continuing our monthly speakers series. Check Page 3 for our upcoming speakers on the second Friday of every month.

Outside of the museum, we hosted euchre tournaments in January and April at Pronto Restaurant in Royal Oak, with the proceeds supporting our museum. If you are a euchre player and would like an enjoyable and casual evening with old and new friends, check our website for future euchre events.



Memorial Day, Monday, May 26, is our annual **Pancake Breakfast** fundraiser from 7 – 11 a.m. at the Farmers Market.

This popular community event is sandwiched around the city's Memorial Day parade that starts at 9 a.m. at Fourth and Main streets and the remembrance of our fallen heroes held at Centennial Park. Please join us before or after these events (or both) for the "Best Pancakes in Town." Our dedicated team

will be serving and welcoming all, with the proceeds helping maintain and preserve the city's history at our museum. Cost is \$10 adults, \$5 kids under 10.

We also invite walkers to participate in the **Memorial Day Parade**. Participants must be members of the Royal Oak Historical Society and will promote the museum by wearing optional historical clothing and carrying small American flags. We will provide the banner for the walkers, as well as the small flags. If interested, visit <https://bit.ly/42BNjRm>, complete a waiver that will be mailed to you, and plan to arrive at 8:15 a.m. on Memorial Day at South Main and Lincoln. We are encouraging historical clothing for parade walkers but not required. Contact historical society board member Marcy Dwyer at (248) 506-4574 with any questions.

Additionally, preorder forms will be available at the Pancake Breakfast for a second edition of the book *Royal Oak Images: Yesterday's Charm Today's Treasures*. The book will be available for sale at the museum this summer.

Another fundraising event, our **Granny's Attic Sale**, will be held Saturday, May 31, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the museum. Items to donate (no bedding or clothing) can be dropped off at the museum Tuesday, May 27 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. or Friday, May 30 from 5–7 p.m. Furthermore, we are looking for volunteers for the event. If you are interested in helping, message board member Deb Anderson at [royaloakdeb@gmail.com](mailto:royaloakdeb@gmail.com).



Moving into summer, our focus shifts to the annual **Auto Show** fundraiser on Saturday, August 2. The museum and surrounding grounds make for a quaint, intimate presentation of the cars. The "Muscle & More at the Museum" event is a prelude to the annual Woodward Dream Cruise and allows an up-close experience with many beautifully restored classic vehicles. Food and beverages will be available.

Leading up to the Auto Show, we will be participating in an event on Wednesday, June 25, at Memorial Park for a Royal Oak Leprechauns baseball game. We will have several classic cars there, with opportunities to win prizes and help support our mission. Have a relaxing summer evening, enjoy some good baseball, and support our organization.

I sincerely hope you enjoy this and the other quarterly newsletter issues that tell the stories of the people and happenings of our city's history. It is with much appreciation I applaud our entire staff for their expertise and commitment to this publication. Also note we have unveiled our updated **Royal Oak Historical Society logo** on the cover of this issue, designed by board member Mike Frentz.

Our museum is a prized asset in our community. We hope you can visit as well as join us in our efforts to preserve our history and educate others of our past. We know that today will be our yesterday tomorrow and what we do to commemorate each day and year in our city is so important to our future. 🍌



# Curator's Corner

BY JOHANNA SCHURRER

**WITH SPRING AND WARMER WEATHER**, the museum is responding by refreshing our display cases to highlight more of our collections — check out our new display of midcentury ladies' hats. We also have new display panels for our featured exhibits that are less bulky and easier to handle and which take up less floor space. Exhibits coming up this year will include Shakespeare in the Park, automotive designers, researching the history of your house, and the annual South Oakland Art Association exhibit.



*Royal Oak elementary school students at the museum learning about the city's place in Underground Railroad history.*

Our own exhibit, "A Tangled Web: African Americans in 19th Century Royal Oak," will continue through the end of May. It has been well attended by a diverse group of visitors, including some from beyond Royal Oak and Oakland County. There are several reasons for this, including a new marketing strategy to extend our promotions beyond our borders. In February and March, we also hosted seven classes of fourth graders from Northwood and Upton elementary schools who were here to experience the exhibit. The total number of visitors this quarter was 274 compared to 59 last year.

The Speaker Series also drew in a large attendance (186 people versus 65 last year), and we were even able to meet some descendants of the Duncan family who lived here and in Detroit and were abolitionists. Leslie S. Edwards, one of our volunteers and curator of the exhibit, also spoke at the Historical Society of Michigan's 67th Annual Local History Conference at Oakland University in late March to 165 attendees.

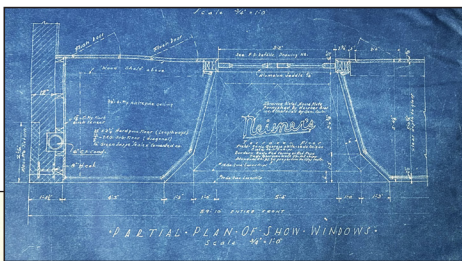
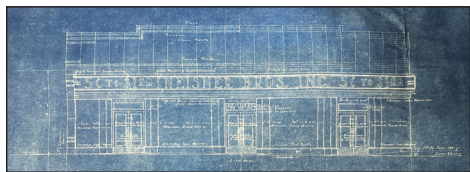
**ONE OF OUR GOALS** is to focus on collections management. This includes photographing and measuring objects to improve the catalog record, and rehousing materials according to museum standards. New acid-free boxes have helped us free up shelf space. Exhibit subject-matter files have also been created to help with research for future displays.

This year the Royal Oak Historical Society will recognize centennial homes built in 1925 or before. See Page 8 for a preview of the plans and watch for more publicity beginning in June. This is just one of our many activities to help promote Royal Oak history.

## From Our Collections

### Blueprints from Neisner Brothers Variety Store

One of the Royal Oak Historical Society's recent acquisitions is a set of Neisner Brothers Inc. blueprints for the Neisner Brothers store that was at the northeast corner of Washington Avenue and Fifth Street in Royal Oak. Some residents may recall the space's



original wooden floors, which were retained through the era of Raupp Campfitters in the mid-1970s through 2003. The building is currently occupied by Keller Williams Metro real estate.

In 1911, brothers Abraham and Joseph Neisner opened their first variety or "five and dime" store in Rochester, New York. By 1963, they had 26 stores in metro Detroit, including Ferndale and Royal Oak.

At Neisner's peak, there were more than 190 stores in 21 different states. The drawings, donated by Machpelah Cemetery Association in memory of Royal Oppenheim, consist of building plans (floor plans, sections, and elevations), electrical diagrams, and mechanical plans.



*Sketch of the Neisner Brothers store in downtown Royal Oak.*

**SPEAKER SERIES** — For details and to purchase tickets go to: [royaloakhistoricalsociety.com](http://royaloakhistoricalsociety.com)

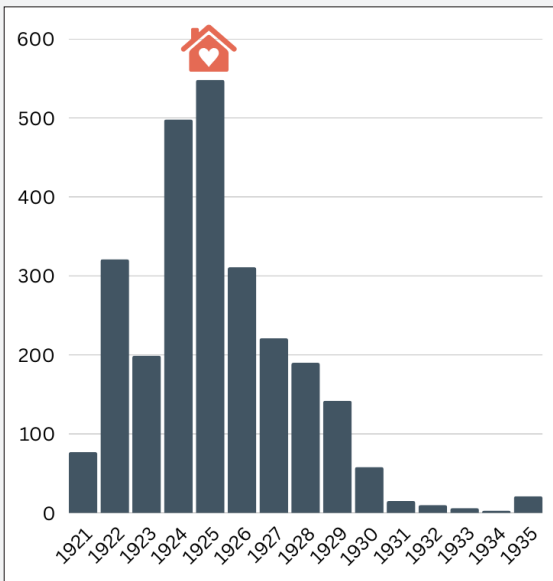
**7 p.m. at the museum • \$15 per person • Space limited to 50**

**Friday, May 9 — Victory in Europe** by Steve Mrozek

**Friday, June 13 — Great Lakes Lighthouse Adventure** by Ellen Kehoe

# Royal Oak's 1925 Housing Boom • Continued from Page 1

HOUSE PERMITS BY YEAR (1921 – 1935)



## 1920s: BOOM

In the 1920s, Royal Oak was growing quickly. Many people moved to the city because of jobs in nearby Detroit, especially in auto factories. Cars were becoming more common, and better roads and streetcars made it easy to live in Royal Oak and work in Detroit.

Because of this, builders started turning farms into neighborhoods. Houses were affordable, and — now that Royal Oak was officially a city — better roads, schools, and services were becoming available to residents. By 1925, home construction was at an all-time high with 548 new homes built. It wasn't until after World War II that Royal Oak would experience another surge in housing.

## 1930s: BUST

Then, barely into its first decade as a city, Royal Oak was hit by the stock market crash of 1929. As the economy crumbled, jobs disappeared, and banks stopped issuing home loans. Throughout the United States families struggled to pay their bills, and some lost their homes entirely.

With little money to go around, new construction came to a standstill. In 1934, only three new homes were built in the entire city. While a few small projects emerged later in the decade, overall growth remained sluggish, a stark contrast to the building boom of the 1920s.

Article continued from Page 1

the population (5,460) were working men. This calculates to 44% of the working men were Ford employees. Additional men worked for Chrysler. Ford produced 2,024,254 vehicles in 1925. It would not produce this annual volume again until 1955.

**ROYAL OAK**

**LOTS WORTH FIGHTING FOR AT THESE PRICES**

50-ft. lots on 60-ft. street	\$775; \$ 80 down
60-ft. lots on 60-ft. street	\$950; 95 down
55-ft. corners on 60-ft. street	\$290; 120 down
50-ft. lots on 80-ft. boulevard	\$950; 95 down
60-ft. lots on 80-ft. boulevard	\$1175; 120 down
65-ft. corners on 80-ft. boulevard	\$1325; 135 down

These greatly underpriced lots are highly restricted and located in Royal Oak's most exclusive residential section, near North Main street, handy to street car and bus lines. A fine place to live.

\$10 monthly payments on principal buys any priced lot while this sale is on. It can't last long.

**WRITE BOX 466, TRIBUNE**

The Daily Tribune, July 23, 1925

**IN 1925, LOTS FOR** building cost from \$750 to \$1,500. The value of new buildings in 1925 exceeded \$2.8 million. The village of Royal Oak had 6,000 people in 1920 and the city, whose area was now three times larger, had 20,000 in 1925 and was growing fast, reaching nearly 23,000 by the end of the decade.

Each new development seemed to reinforce the belief that Royal Oak was a place where families could put down roots. By 1928, the completion of the Shrine of the Little Flower church added another landmark to the city, drawing even more attention

to Royal Oak. The opening of Royal Oak High School in 1929 reflected the city's confidence in continued growth.

Then came the crash.

**ON OCTOBER 29, 1929** — Black Tuesday, the stock market collapsed, sending shockwaves through the national economy. Banks failed, businesses shuttered, and unemployment soared. The housing market across the country came to an abrupt halt.

With banks no longer lending, new home construction came to a standstill. Massive job losses in Detroit's auto industry left many struggling to pay their mortgages, leading to a surge in foreclosures. By the early 1930s, new home construction in Royal Oak had dwindled to just 55 houses in the first half of the decade — a staggering drop from that peak of 548 in 1925.

**A CENTURY LATER**, the homes built in 1925 have stood the test of time. They have sheltered generations of families, witnessed Royal Oak's transformation, and remain a cornerstone of the city's character.

To every homeowner living in a century-old house this year we celebrate your home as a living piece of Royal Oak's past, present, and future.

**NO CASH REQUIRED**

**5-Room Brick Veneer BUNGALOW**

**\$5950.00**

Five Rooms and bath, full basement, oak floors, Penn-sular Furnaces, gas heater, laundry tubs, hot water tank, sidewalks, etc.

All you need is a free and clear lot.

A brick 2-flat for \$9900

For full information fill out the coupon below.

Gentlemen: Without obligation to me please send me full information regarding your proposition.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

**J. H. O'Hara Co.**  
625 LAFAYETTE BLDG. CAD. 1405

The Daily Tribune, May 21, 1925

**Beautifully Wooded Lots**

**GLENORIA PARK**

SUBDIVISION

46 Royal Oak - Between University and Farmington Avenues

**One-Third Sold in Two Weeks!!**

**\$1000.00 With 10 PERCENT Down**

The PRICES Are Responsible for the RECORD SALE - and

**Will Be Raised \$250 October 1st**

**WELL RESTRICTED ALL IMPROVEMENTS**

Primarily a place to build - Therefore a good investment

**BERRIDGE and MORRISON**

REALTORS

Royal Oak 1200 • Phones - Arlington 2382

The Daily Tribune, September 24, 1925

**Mark These**

**WHAT GOOD ARE YOUR RENT RECEIPTS?**

Why not put that money into a home of your own. For \$50 down and a very small monthly payment we can sell you a real home with living room, kitchen, two bedrooms, dining alcove, one-car garage, city water and lights, gas available.

Beautiful home in Royal Oak, 3 bed rooms, one-car garage, a real sacrifice; \$300 down, \$50 per month.

Campbell road frontage 43x105; very cheap, must sell.

Ridge road lots, 40x170 for \$2000; small down payments.

**Pilgrim Realty Co.**

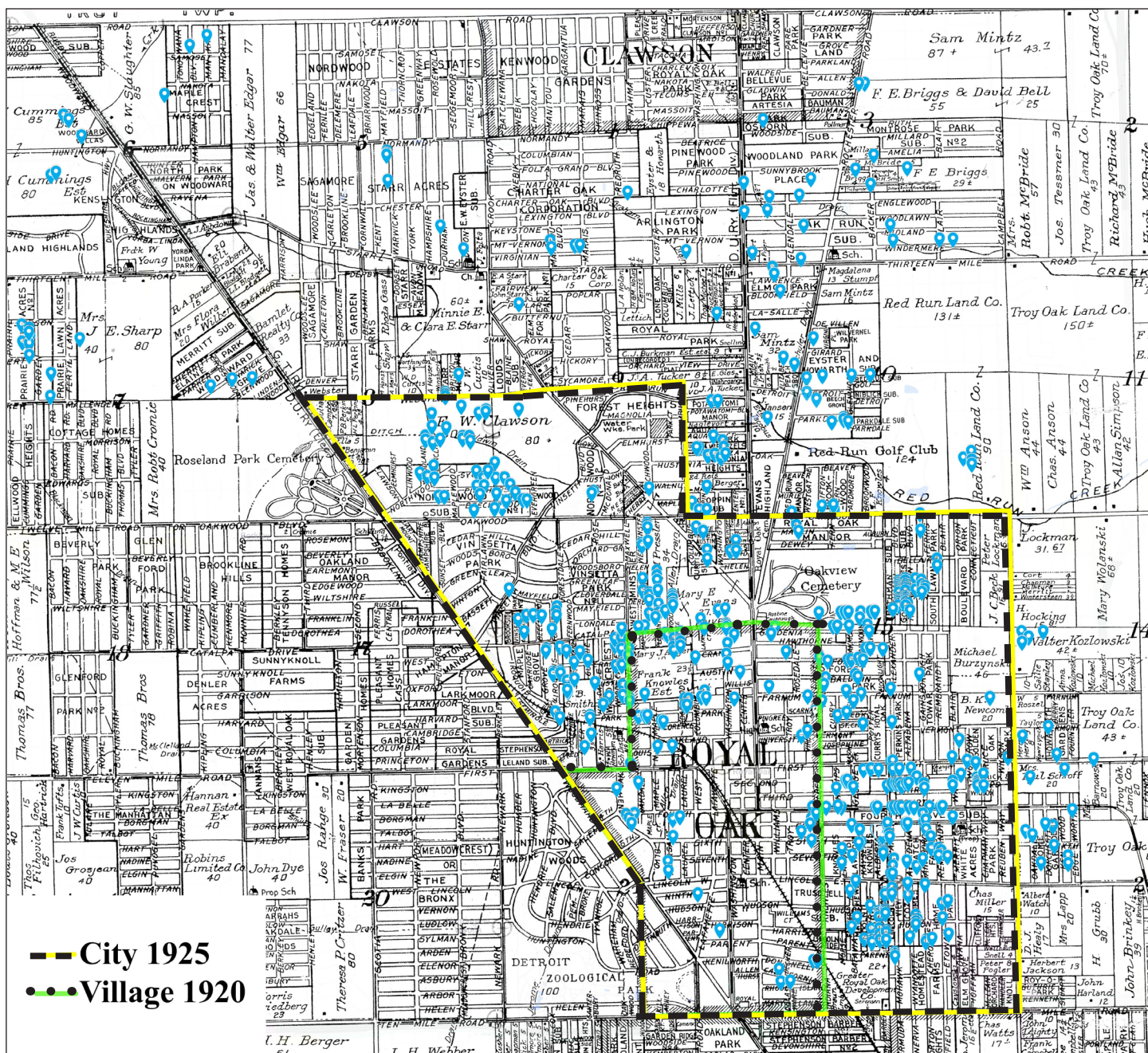
LEE N. DUFFEE, Mgr.

Ten-mile Rd., at Woodward

The Daily Tribune, June 25, 1925



## CHARTING ROYAL OAK'S HOUSING GROWTH



The map shows the growth of the area of Royal Oak. Within the dotted (green) lines was the original Village of Royal Oak in 1920. The dashed (yellow) lines show the boundaries of the City of Royal Oak in 1925. The dots within these areas represent each of the 548 homes built in 1925.

The city annexed territory from the township as it was developed. Two developing areas were outside of the city limits. The first area was north of 12 Mile Road (Oakwood Boulevard) and west of Main Street. The second was north of Lincoln and east of Campbell Road. The village unsuccessfully tried to annex the first area in December 1917 and the city tried in November 1923, November 1924, and April 1926. Finally in April 1927 the land joined the city. Attempts to annex the second area occurred in April 1926, September 1928, and July 1941. Finally in January 1942 it joined the city.

An interactive version of this map of the 1925 homes is found at [romi.gov/1925](http://romi.gov/1925)



# Early Home Design Styles Adorn Royal Oak Neighborhoods

The city's growth in the 1920s introduced several assorted design styles, including bungalow, Arts & Crafts, Foursquare, Colonial, French and English Revival, and others. Below is a sampling of those designs found in the book *Royal Oak Images: Yesterday's Charm Today's Treasures* which have been highlighted in recent years in our newsletter. This summer the second edition will be available for sale at the museum. Check our website for updates.



## BUNGALOW

On the cover: Designed and built in 1925 by Erb-Kidder Lumber Company manager Lee S. Kidder. Clapboard siding was common, along with a front porch to watch children at play and to interact with neighbors. Bungalows took Royal Oak and America by storm. Some cost as little as \$900, helping many fulfill the dream of home ownership.



## TUDOR REVIVAL

Norman Starr, a noted builder in the city whose projects included the Washington Square Building, constructed this 6,936-square-foot Tudor Revival at 160 Hendrie in 1925. Features are the steeply pitched roof, slate shingles with half timbering on the front vertical walls, and small rectangular paned windows.



The Daily Tribune, September 24, 1925



## FOURSQUARE

This 1922 yellow brick Foursquare-style home at 1906 Northwood Boulevard features a dormer that mimics the rooms on the east and west sides of the house. The front door overhang is also of this style.



## COLONIAL REVIVAL

At 1718 West 12 Mile Road, near Fairlawn, sits the Rowland Hill home, built in 1925. The Colonial Revival style, which this house mimics, became the most popular architectural style in America's history after it appeared at the 1876 U.S. Centennial Exposition. The house has a square, symmetrical shape, a paneled front door, dentil trim along the eaves, and five-paned windows across the front.



## ENGLISH TUDOR

In 1928 the Roth Bros., Inc. built this house at 2758 Bamlet to advertise their construction quality. The home had the latest amenities of the era, such as electric refrigeration, oil heating, and multiple electrical outlets. The home has half-timbering on the two front gables and uniquely installed roofing of vertically cut cedar shingles immersed in creosote for color and durability. The interior has two fireplaces, a curved stairway with a decorative wrought-iron baluster, and many archways throughout.

## Six Classic Features of a 1925 Royal Oak Home

1. *Bungalow or Tudor Revival Style* — Many homes from this era in Royal Oak are Craftsman-style bungalows with low-pitched roofs and wide porches, or Tudor Revival homes with steep gables and brick or stucco exteriors.
2. *Solid Wood Doors and Trim* — High-quality oak or pine wood trim, crown molding, and solid wood doors were common features, often stained dark for a rich, warm look.
3. *Original Hardwood Floors* — Homes from this period often have oak or maple hardwood floors, which were built to last and are usually found beneath any later carpeting.
4. *Plaster Walls and Coved Ceilings* — Instead of drywall, homes built in the 1920s typically had lathe-and-plaster walls, sometimes featuring elegant coved ceilings or textured plasterwork.
5. *Small, Detached Garage* — Given the rise of automobiles in the 1920s, many homes had single-car garages set toward the back of the property, often with narrow driveways leading to them.
6. *Brick or Stone Fireplace* — Many homes from this era featured a central fireplace, often in the living room, made of brick or stone. Some had decorative tile surrounds.



## DUTCH COLONIAL

This Dutch Colonial at 214 Lexington Boulevard built in 1924 exhibits the style's unmistakable gambrel roof and frame construction.

Continued on Page 7



## History Uncovered: Former Real Estate Office 'Ghost' Sign

**IN 2022, THE FORMER** Pier 1 Imports building on the east side of Woodward, just south of Normandy, was demolished, as was the Harvest Garden Oriental Food carryout restaurant, to make way for a new car wash. The Harvest Garden demolition revealed a long-concealed sign (a so-called "ghost sign" — see below) on the adjacent building for the Elmer M. Clark Real Estate Company.



The storefront at the right, Harvest Garden carryout restaurant, was torn down in 2022 ...



... exposing the Elmer M. Clark sign on the wall of the adjacent store.

Photos by Don Callihan

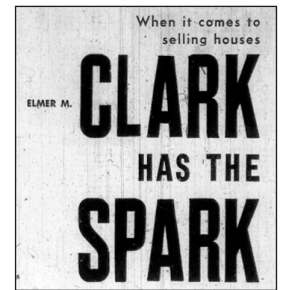
Elmer M. Clark was a Detroit real estate broker who opened a branch office in Royal Oak in the spring of 1952. While the Clark office was not particularly noteworthy, it was one of several real estate offices that lined Woodward Avenue, including Berridge & Morrison, B.F. Chamberlain, Harold Meininger, and Rinke Real Estate. All had one thing in common: they were located on the east side of Woodward Avenue, where they could easily be visited by Detroiters driving north from the city in search of housing in the suburbs. Real estate offices being located on the east side of Woodward meant potential homebuyers could just pull in directly without looping around to the west side of Woodward.

The Elmer M. Clark sign has been painted over and will never be seen again, but for a brief time it reminded us of a bygone era when Royal Oak and suburbs to the north were experiencing their most significant growth.

— Don Callihan

A ghost sign is an old hand-painted advertising sign that has been preserved on a building for an extended period of time. The sign may be kept for its nostalgic appeal, or simply indifference by the owner.

— Wikipedia

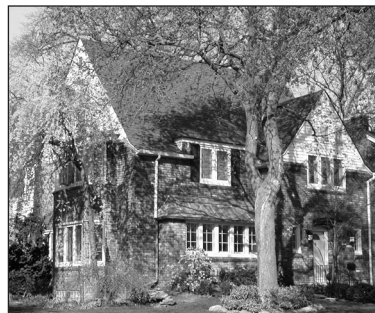


The Daily Tribune,  
May 3, 1955

## Early Home Styles • Continued from Page 6

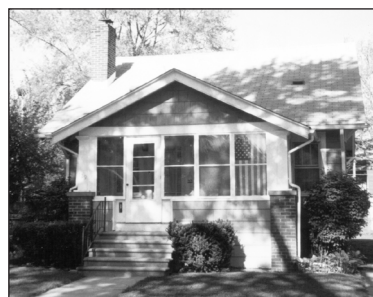
### COLONIAL

This brick colonial at 25455 Dundee built in 1923 is located in the section of Royal Oak west of Woodward Avenue and north of the Detroit Zoo. This small area was part of the original village of Royal Oak.



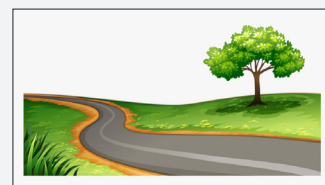
### BUNGALOW

Believed to be a "kit house," this bungalow at 129 Baker Street was built in 1925. A decorative and structural feature of the gabled roof is a set of wooden supports at the peak, midway on both sides of the triangle-shaped side and again at the bottom of the triangle.



## Road Quiz

Can you match the former road names with the current names?



### Old Name

1. Clawson Road
2. Eighth Street
3. First Street
4. Monnier Road
5. New Hampshire Ave.
6. Niles Road
7. Oakwood Blvd.
8. Paint Creek Road
9. Starr Road

### Current Name

- a. Coolidge Highway
- b. Eleven Mile Road
- c. Fourteen Mile Road
- d. Lincoln Avenue
- e. Main Street
- f. Rochester Road
- g. Ten Mile Road
- h. Thirteen Mile Road
- i. Twelve Mile Road

**Answers on Page 8**

## How to Honor Your 100-Year-Old Home



The Royal Oak Historical Society is marking the milestone of the 548 houses built in 1925 with several ways for homeowners to commemorate their historic homes.

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

- A certificate issued by the Historical Society and embossed by the City of Royal Oak designating your house as an official centennial home. Available by preorder this summer at the museum at no cost. Details to follow on our website and in the next newsletter.
- Homeowners will be able to purchase a forged metal plaque designating their home's centennial status with the Royal Oak Historical Society seal. The plaques will be available at Frentz Hardware and proceeds will benefit the preservation of the museum and the work of the Historical Society.
- Homeowners 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. Read more in the article below on this page.



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

## Discover the History of Your Home's Renovation

**ARE YOU CURIOUS** about your home? Would you like to find out more about potential renovation or construction projects or who were the previous owners of your home? Or perhaps you'd like to learn more about the homes in your neighborhood. The Royal Oak Historical Society may be able to help you answer those questions.

Sharon McMurray, a volunteer at the museum, recently processed hundreds of records from the Royal Oak Assessor's Office which document when permits were pulled for various residential renovation or construction projects as well as some commercial projects.

**THE PERMIT CARDS** may include a photograph of the house, a site plan showing its dimensions, dates when permits were pulled, and handwritten notes regarding the projects. Generally, the cards span the early 1950s through 2002. The collection does not contain records for every parcel in the city, and the cards do not include the homeowner's name or the year the house was built.

This collection is open for research by appointment only; email [curator@royaloakhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:curator@royaloakhistoricalsociety.org). Our next newsletter and an exhibit starting in September will describe more about a variety of resources to discover your home's history and occupants.

### Road Quiz

#### MILE ROAD NAME RETENTION URGED

Retaining the names of the mile roads should be given serious consideration by Royal Oak, City Manager R. J. Whitney has declared to the city commission. As a result, he has been instructed to take up the matter with Ferndale, Pleasant Ridge and Clawson, all of which have one of the mile roads as a joint boundary with Royal Oak.

Mr. Whitney recalled a recent protest of a Pleasant Ridge resident against the different communities giving different names to the same street and in some cases abandoning the mile road name.

He recommended that New Hampshire be changed to Ten-Mile road; Oakwood boulevard to Twelve-Mile road; Starr road, from Crooks road to Main street, to Thirteen-Mile road; and Clawson road to Fourteen-Mile road. Whether First street should retain that name as the base street of the city, or should be changed to Eleven-Mile road throughout was a problem, he admitted.

The commission suggested that Mr. Whitney first confer with the other municipalities. Both Ferndale and Pleasant Ridge use the name of Ten-Mile road, while Royal Oak calls it New Hampshire avenue. The other roads mentioned are called one name over part of their course and another name in another part.

The Daily Tribune, April 16, 1929

Answers: 1c, 2d, 3b, 4a, 5g, 6e, 7i, 8f, 9h

### RECENT DONORS

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### New Members

Rebekah Barr  
John Cashman  
Michelle Cook  
Mary Lynn Farrell  
Kathleen Lubanski  
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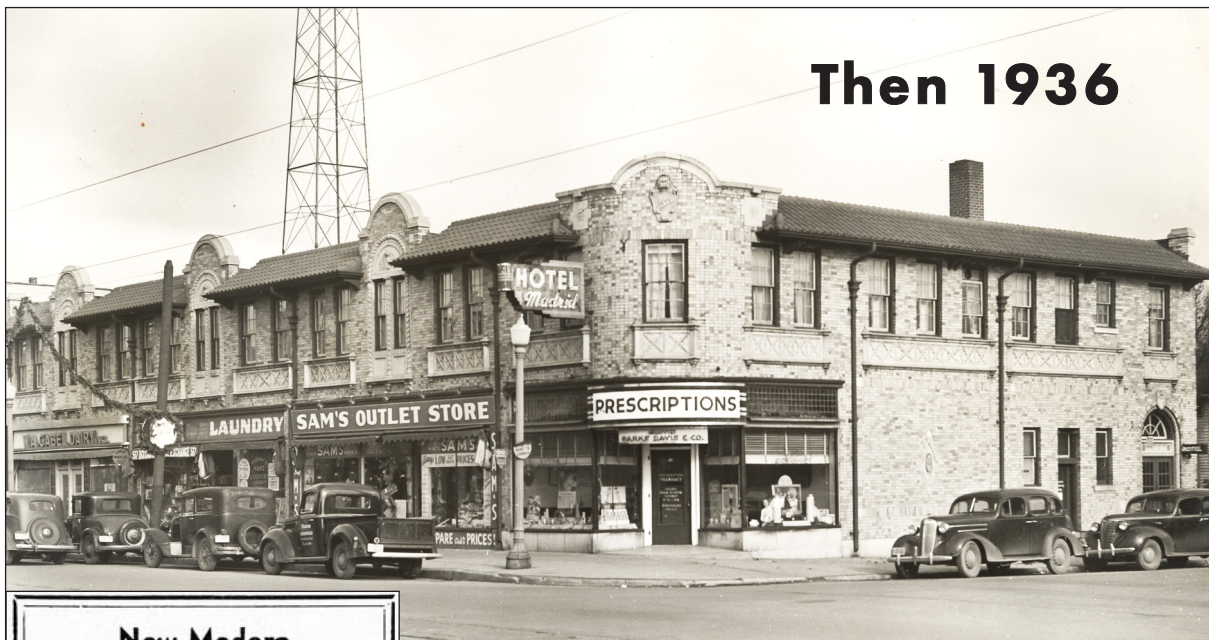


# Royal Oak Then & Now

BY JOHN MAURICE

**THE HOTEL MADRID** is one of the more unique buildings in our city and has been standing at the northeast corner of West Sixth Street and South Washington for more than 100 years. Built in 1918 and consisting of a two-story building with a striking Spanish architectural style, throughout most of its history it existed as multiple storefronts on the first floor with a hotel, then apartments upstairs.

## Then 1936



Longtime Royal Oak entrepreneurs and current owners of the Royal Oak Taphouse (previously Jimi's Coney Island), the Pallis family, owned the hotel property for more than 30 years from 1982 until 2013. At that time, the second floor consisted of rooms to rent, with 25 rooms and 12 shared bathrooms. In later years, because there

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weren't any signs advertising the rooms and no front desk, you would have to visit Jim Pallis at his restaurant across Washington to request a room to rent. The weekly rates were \$100 for a room with a bathroom or \$65 for one with a shared bath.

**UPON THE SALE TO A NEW OWNER** in 2013, there were plans to convert the property into a boutique hotel with much higher rates. As of this year, the plans for the hotel haven't come to fruition, but the property has remained very active, with retail and office space occupying the first floor and office space on the second floor.

The **Then** photo dates from 1936 and shows the former Hotel Madrid sign hanging on the Washington side of the building. W.A. Gabel Dairy Inc. occupied the first floor on the north end, Murphy Hand Laundry and Sam's Outlet Store in the center, and the Parke Davis & Co. pharmacy took up the southern portion of the building.

The property has remained remarkably unchanged over the last 100 years and maintains its original Spanish architecture. Today, Mathnasium and Arrow Strategies occupy the first floor, and SMB has opened offices on the second floor.

One last remnant reflects the building's original existence as a hotel. Over the wonderfully arched rear doorway on Sixth Street, there is a limestone slab with the word "Madrid" carved into it.

## Now



Now photos by John Maurice

# 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

**THERE ARE NO BIDDERS**, so far, for the 1.1-acre Starr School site on Thirteen Mile at Devon, west of Crooks. The site includes a 58-year-old building used as an instructional materials center for several years. The building was closed this year to cut operating costs. Bruce K. Potthoff, executive director for business affairs, told Royal Oak School Board members that "persons who have looked at the property find the old four-room school building interesting, but none have a use for it and sale will probably include demolition of the building." The existing Starr Elementary School and site, 3412 Devon, adjoins the sale property to the north and west. It is not for sale. Old Starr School was built in 1917. The existing Starr School was constructed in 1925 and added to in 1952, 1958 and 1963.

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**HILEY H. WARD**, former Royal Oak resident and award-winning religion writer for the *Detroit Free Press*, has published a new book, *Religion 2101 A.D.: Who or What Will Be God?* The author draws on scripture, international scholars, science fiction writers, scientists, church leaders, futurologists and theologians to suggest possible future concepts of the deity. Ward, who was employed by the *Free Press* from 1962-73, is currently working on his Ph.D. in journalism at the University of Minnesota. He is also the author of *Rock 2000* and *Space-Age Sunday* and is a past president of the Religious Newswriters Association.

### 60 years ago — 1965

**ROYAL OAK SCHOOL BOARD** kept pace with the South Oakland teacher salary market by approving a teacher salary package calling for scale increases of \$100-\$440 per teacher. Royal Oak's current teacher scales pay from \$5,100-\$7,981 for a bachelor's degree to nine years of experience and \$5,400-\$8,669 for a master's degree.

New scales will pay from \$5,200-\$8,144 for bachelor's degrees and \$5,600-\$9,109 for the master's, adding an extra 11th step to three advanced to master's degree scales. The extra step will permit regular classroom teachers to earn over \$10,000, a major goal of most teacher associations.

\*\*\*

**ROYAL OAK CITY COMMISSION** gave a tentative approval to two new requests for liquor by the glass licenses, tabled four others and gave final approval to the city's 20th beer and wine license. A \$100,000 expansion of the Belanger House, 1812 North Main, into a restaurant and cocktail lounge and a plan to add a service bar and minor remodeling at Thoar's Dining Room, 4313 West Thirteen Mile, near Greenfield, were given tentative approval. Final approval was granted to LaScala Restaurant in Northwood Shopping Center, Thirteen Mile and Woodward. A proposal to approve the city's first liquor by the glass to Susie Q Fish & Chips, 2216 North Woodward, was tabled.

### 70 years ago — 1955

**THE OPENING OF** the Detroit Zoological Park May 19 will see three orangutans and one gorilla performing for the crowds. Zoo Director Frank G. McInnis left Monday night to ship the animals from the Trefflich Bird and Animal Company in New York City. Two other gorillas slated for shipment to the zoo are detained in French Equatorial Africa awaiting clearance by French authorities. The barrel-chested beasts are being introduced to zoo-goers for the first time. There was no place to display them until the new amphitheater was completed this year.

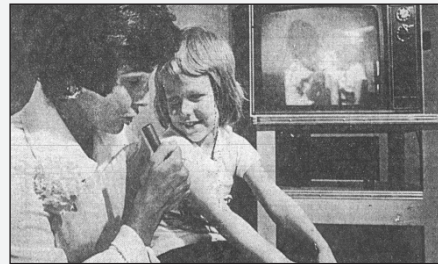
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**SCHOOL CENSUS TIME** is here again. Starting today (May 12) and continuing through the end of May, scores of workers will make a house-to-house survey in South Oakland County and across Michigan to count children between 5 and 19 years old. The census determines the amount of state aid each school district receives. Royal Oak will use a new system of

### 50 Years Ago — May 3, 1975



**TRIPLETS ARRIVE** — Robert and Carol Heller are parents of triplets born at William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak at 12:53 a.m. April 30. Carol, above, has her arms full with Cary, 4 pounds, 15 ounces; Mark, 5 pounds, 7 ounces; and Daniel, 5 pounds, 13 ounces. The Hellers' daughter, Rachel, age 5, had a "Televisit" with her mother and new brothers at the hospital on Friday (May 2). Rachel talks with Judy MacManus, who is hostess for Televisit program in which youngsters may talk with relative by telephone and they can see another on closed circuit television. (Tribune photo)





tabulating the 28,000 children expected in the census this year. The information such as age, address, school and school district will be coded and placed on a special card and run through an IBM machine. This gives automatic totals. It also will help find children of school age who are not enrolled in school and locate handicapped children in each district.

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**PATROLMAN CHARLES D. SEIDL** of Royal Oak has a jinxed left foot. For the third time in his life, Seidl was hobbling around on crutches with his toes poking out from under a heavy white cast. Seidl broke his foot Wednesday (May 11) chasing a runaway 14-year-old girl. He and Patrolman William Nancarrow spotted her running through an alley off Rhode Island street, east of Main at 11:45 p.m. Seidl leaped a hedge and apparently landed on a rock. Nancarrow continued the chase and caught the girl. The crutches Seidle had stored away were used twice before when he was injured playing polo and broke his left toe and again when a piece of machinery fell on it.

### 80 years ago — 1945

**ALL SOUTH OAKLAND COUNTY** communities will participate in the tin can collection scheduled for Monday, May 14. City trucks will begin their rounds at 8 a.m. Monday and residents are urged to place their tin cans at the curb Sunday night to insure collection. Communities taking part in this drive are Hazel Park. Ferndale, Pleasant Ridge. Huntington Woods, Clawson, Royal Oak, Berkley, Oak Park and Southfield Township. "The end of the European war does not bring an end to the responsibilities of the home front. Tin cans are still vitally needed to aid in the defeat of Japan," salvage officials said today. Residents of South Oakland are urged to contribute every piece of tin scrap possible to help insure a speedy and total victory in the Pacific.

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**SURPRISED RESIDENTS** saw a two-hour snowfall this morning (May 10). Large, wet flakes began to fall at 7 a.m. but melted on hitting the ground. The last May snowfall was recorded May 24, 1925, and the record of snow on May 31, 1910, still stands, according to the Detroit Weather Bureau. The snowfall this morning, was general throughout Lower Michigan, hitting Detroit, Flint, Grand Rapids, Gladwin, Lansing, Muskegon, Jackson and Battle Creek.

### 95 years ago — 1930

**ALL ROYAL OAK TELEPHONES** now carry 4 digits, thus, 0159. The innovations greeted Royal Oak exchange telephone users when the Michigan Bell Telephone company's June directories were distributed today (June 2). The Village of Berkley for the first time is listed separately from Royal Oak. All numbers were increased to four numerals by the addition of zero before the former number. Berkley was listed in a separate section due to the increasing number of phones. In the case of numbers formerly having three numerals, one zero was prefixed, two were prefixed before numbers with two numerals and three before the numbers with but one number.



### 100 years ago — 1925

**ALL SAMPLES OF** Royal Oak water taken from the wells in use at the Royal Oak water works plant and sent to the state department of health for analysis have been free from pollution. Samples are taken from the Royal Oak wells every three months and sent to Lansing. Recently, the newest pump was operated for a short time and samples taken from that did show contamination, but the water was never turned over to the general system and won't be until further tests show that everything is alright.

\*\*\*

**SHALL ROYAL OAK** have another fire station in the north-end or in south end? Shall its next addition to equipment be a pumper or a chemical truck? These and many other phases of the question popped up in a discussion of the fire department situation which developed at the Royal Oak Commission meeting in March when Commissioner Fred W. Smith said he thought the commission should consider additions to the equipment and also asked about another building. "I don't know that we are going to build," said Mayor Codling. "I don't think we need another building now. There is no doubt that we do need more equipment soon. But I believe that we need another light chemical rather than a second \$12,000 pumper." "As the high value business district increases, we will need another pumper to stand by," added City Manager Beauvals. "But what I believe the town needs now is a station in the south end, not the north end. That is because our greatest fire hazard is the lumber yards in the south end of the city. Much of this is cut off by the Grand Trunk and a long freight train in the path of the fire apparatus might result in a disastrous fire which would threaten the whole city, Beauvals added. "Then I believe we should build a north end station in a year or so."

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**THE LARGEST PARADE EVER** held in Royal Oak is expected to occur Saturday (June 13), when members of the Ku Klux Klan from five counties will assemble. It is expected that at least 12,000 will be in line. This will include women and children as well as men from Oakland, Wayne, Lapeer, Genesee, and Macomb counties. The Klansmen will assemble in a wooded stretch between Gardenia Avenue and Twelve-Mile Road, near the eastern city limits. Whether a meeting would be held there in the evening has not been disclosed. The route of the parade has been tentatively selected, but may be changed at the last minute, according to traffic conditions. To assist the Royal Oak police in caring for the traffic conditions developed by the great crowd and the parade, a number of State Police have been assigned to duty in Royal Oak that day. 🍌

*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.*



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