



ROYAL OAK

# Historical Society

MAY 2018 • ROYALOAKHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG

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### IN MEMORIAM:

Leon "Pete" Mancour

August 20, 1934 - March 10, 2018

## A Tribute to Leon "Pete" Mancour

Leon "Pete" Mancour, age 83, of Royal Oak, passed away March 10, 2018. Pete was a longtime member and past president of the Royal Oak Historical Society and in 2016 was honored with the Thomas F. Wurdock Award, for the time and talent he gave to many civic organizations throughout his long volunteering tenure in Royal Oak.

His belief in the viability of creating the Royal Oak Historical Museum was notable, and he worked tirelessly, along with many others, including Tom Wurdock, Muriel Versagi and Jay Dunstan, to make that dream a reality.

His expertise in construction and business was particularly helpful in his work with the Museum, as well as with the Orson Starr House Guild.

Pete's participation with service groups and city committees varied from construction and real estate projects to tutoring and mentoring.

He also was a member of the Royal Oak VFW, Optimist Club, Rotary and was the recipient of the Royal Oak Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year award in 2010.

"Most people knew our Dad had opinions and liked to be heard, but maybe they didn't know how much of that came from the heart," said his daughter Linda Cooke.

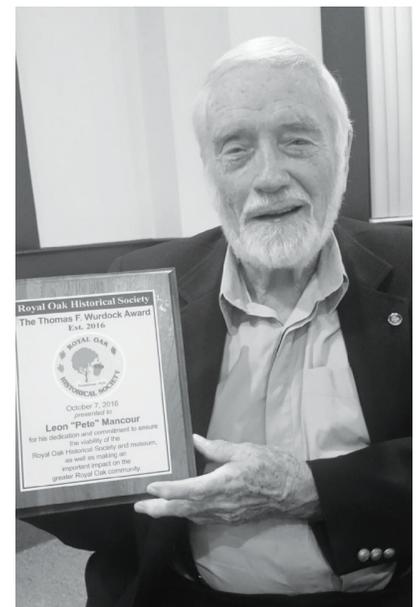
"He showed he cared by doing things, handling things, and getting things done!

"We knew how much the Society meant to him, as he talked often of all the wonderful people he worked beside and loved to argue with. He was very proud to be an active part of all that has been achieved over the years. Dad loved a challenge, and life was always better when he had a task to do or someone to help.

"My sister, Jeri said it best when she said, 'He was passionate with strong convictions, ornery, humorous, loving, and giving. He strongly believed in the power of the mind and that got him through some tough times.' He will be missed."

### The following is by ROHS Vice President and Past President Jay Dunstan

On March 10, we lost an icon within our community. Pete Mancour will be remembered in many different ways by all of us — a dedicated family man, a reliable friend for those in need, someone who quietly, often behind the scenes, did everything he could to make Royal Oak better for all. His accomplishments have left a positive mark upon



Pete Mancour with the 2016 ROHS "Thomas F. Wurdock" Award; Photograph Courtesy of Pete Mancour Family

Continued on page 6

# Memorial Day Pancake Breakfast

*brought to you by the*

## Royal Oak Historical Society

### Monday, May 28th from 7AM until Noon

at the Royal Oak Farmers Market



### \*\*\* ALL YOU CAN EAT \*\*\*

Adults \$6 Children 10 and Under \$3

**Come Join Us Before Or After The Parade  
Rain Or Shine!!**



HOLIDAY  
MARKET



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**The Holiday Market Royal Oak and The Hollywood Markets**

# Homes & Buildings In Royal Oak

*Edited by John S. Schultz*

Each newsletter, the Royal Oak Historical Society will focus on historic homes and buildings in our city. The selections come from the book, "Royal Oak Images, Yesterday's Charm Today's Treasures," published by the Roundtable of Royal Oak Historical Organizations, a standing committee of the Royal Oak Historical Commission of the City of Royal Oak. The book was published in 2006, and a second edition is in the works.

We encourage other Royal Oak residents to share the history of their home for possible publication. For more information, contact: John S. Schultz at [johnsschultz@sbcglobal.net](mailto:johnsschultz@sbcglobal.net).

## The Branstner House 215 Pingree Boulevard

*Three Story Arts and Crafts House Built in 1920*

Located on the first block east of North Main Street, within easy walking distance of downtown Royal Oak, this Arts and Crafts three-story house has always been a single-family residence. Three sides of the yard are enclosed by a white picket fence while the fourth side has a shared driveway leading to the clapboard sided two-and-half car garage in the back yard. Privacy screening toward the back of the house along the driveway shields an attached sunroom.

The clapboard siding on the house is cedar and painted a sunny shade of lemon yellow. A unique feature of the clapboards is the way in which they were applied. Starting at the top of the house they are narrower and become wider toward the bottom. All of the window and door frames are painted white.

The original beveled glass front door and characteristic exterior framing have been preserved since 1920 when the house was built.

Bob and Sadie Branstner purchased the house in the late 1980s. Inside, the first floor has four rooms with a stairway of oak against one wall that leads upstairs. Beveled glass doors separate the living and dining rooms. A large bay with three windows graces one wall of the dining room. Oak was used for a built-in seating area with drawers beneath for storage. The kitchen was remodeled in the early 1980s.

On the second floor there are three bedrooms and a full bathroom. In the bathroom, a door opens onto the roof of the sunroom below. In the smallest bedroom, a door opens to reveal a stairway to the third floor, or attic.



## Royal Oak Then & Now

by John Maurice, ROHS Facebook Editor

For this edition of *Royal Oak Then & Now*, we travel to the block on the east side of Main Street between Third & Fourth Streets. The "Then" photo dates to April 5, 1940 with Cunningham's Drugs holding down the corner. At the top of the photo, you can see the streetcar wires overhead turning in from west-bound Fourth Street to north Main. Moving north on Main Street from Cunningham's, we have Royal Oak Sweets Restaurant followed by Packing House

Market, which advertises "Quality Meats & Fancy Fruits." The next storefront is the oldest remaining building on Main Street and currently houses Hermann's Bakery. Emil Gies' store follows, and the last two buildings on the block hold the Father & Son store with Kroger on the north end of the block at Third Street. Although the storefronts have changed, the profiles of the buildings remain remarkably similar to how they stood 78 years ago.



Photo Credits: "Then" Photograph Courtesy of the Royal Oak Historical Society Museum, "Now" Courtesy of John Maurice

## Photo Game

by Bob Muller, ROHS Board Member

This issue's Photo Game features photos taken from the roof of the new parking structure across from the U.S. Post Office. Can you identify which roofs of Royal Oak buildings are pictured here?

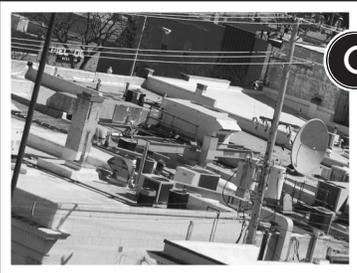
(Answers on page 7)



A



B



C



D

Photo Credits: Bob Muller

## ROHS Notices



### ROHS Town Hall Talk June 15th: "Twisted History"

"Twisted History" – a look at 20 years of Royal Oak and Oakland County issues through the Dan Saad's *Daily Tribune* editorial cartoons will be presented as part of the Royal Oak Historical Society "Town Hall Talk" series at the Royal Oak Historical Museum on June 15. Watch for details! Attendance is limited.



### Parade Marchers Needed!

For the past several years, representatives of the Royal Oak Historical Society have marched in the Royal Oak Memorial Day Parade May 28. Additional marchers always welcome! Call Bill Sullivan for details. 248-765-2136.

**Donations to the Royal Oak Historical Society  
Are Gratefully Accepted**

Send checks payable to:  
The Royal Oak Historical Society • 1411 West Webster Rd.  
Royal Oak, MI 48073  
Donations are tax-deductible. Thank you in advance.

## A Tribute to Leon “Pete” Mancour

*continued from front cover*

all of us. Sometimes gruff, sometimes with a big smile, Pete would always find a way to make the best of any situation. My experiences with Pete will live with me forever. Foremost will be the renovation of the museum during 2009-2010. The ROHS Board appointed him construction foreperson—a position more than fitting his vast experience. Pete fought hard, with contractors, city inspectors, and anyone else who dared to obstruct the successful completion of the project. Sometimes those battles took on a humorous nature - sometimes they didn't. Every time I walk into the museum I'm reminded of Pete and how he

put his heart and soul into every aspect of that building. When each of you visit, hopefully you'll be reminded as well.

I'll miss how he would ask Patty, "Why'd you marry this guy?" I'll also miss how in one moment he'd look at someone and say "What the hell were you thinking?" and in the next, tell that same person what a good job they were doing. I've missed seeing Lita and Pete in their yard on a summer day, tending to the flowers and plants. Or their Christmas White Elephant parties. Make no mistake - in those situations, Pete was taking his orders from Lita.

But where I'll really miss Pete is coming up this month — our ROHS Memorial Day Pancake Breakfast. From our phone calls and meetings to make sure everything was just right to not see him roaming the floor during the breakfast and engaging friends and neighbors, it will be difficult.

It heartens me to know that a bit of Pete will always be with each and every one of us. In each of our own special ways, we'll remember him fondly. We'll use memories of Pete, and the examples of care and compassion he possessed, to help strengthen our character. In that way, Pete will live on.



2.

*“Santa Pete” with great grandsons Clayton and Gavin; Photograph by Linda Cooke*

## ROHS Cartoon Vault

by Dan Saad, ROHS Board Member

### Love Live the King?

The Daily Tribune | January 24, 1985



King Boots, a record holding champion Old English Sheep Dog was on trial for murder in 44th District Court, before Judge Edward Sosnick, in the mauling death of 87-year-old Gertrude Monroe, the mother of Kathryn Schwarb, one of his owners.

Public opinion supported sparing the King, and he became front-page news not just in Oakland County, but nationwide in *The New York Times* and the *LA Times*. A local radio DJ even adapted the words of "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer," to the case.

In ruling that the dog was vicious, Judge Sosnick offered the Schwarbs a choice. He ordered Boots destroyed by lethal injection, unless his owners agreed to confine him at home for the rest of his life, after having him neutered and pulling his teeth. The Schwarbs chose the second option, but King Boots died at home, of unknown causes in August 1985.

*Dan Saad was the editorial cartoonist at The Daily Tribune from 1983-1999. He still draws editorial cartoons regularly for Crain's Detroit Business. He is a Royal Oak resident and member of the Royal Oak Historical Society Board of Directors. Dan's Cartoon Blog: <http://saadcommentary.blogspot.com/>*

## President's Message

by Deb Anderson

The Royal Oak Historical Society's biggest event of the year is fast approaching, and we'd love to have your help!

Our annual Memorial Day Pancake Breakfast is coming up on May 28 at Farmers Market, and as most of you probably know, we serve up sausage and the best pancakes in the world to hundreds of people that morning.

This is a huge undertaking, and lots of volunteers are needed to make sure it's a big success. There are different ways to help – mixing, grilling, serving, taking tickets, general organizing, cleanup – so there's something for everyone. We arrive about 5:30 - 6 a.m., and the cleanup is usually done by about 1 p.m. We try to schedule people in two-hour shifts but we are definitely flexible!

If you have some time to help us out that day, we would really appreciate it. Email me at [president@royaloakhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:president@royaloakhistoricalsociety.org) or give me a call at 248-542-2846, and we'll figure out which shift and which job works best for you. Thanks!

- Photo A: Sole Sisters is in the upper right hand corner
- Photo B: Washington Square Building
- Photo C: The "300" block on Main Street (including Starbucks)
- Detroit skyline, Ren Cen to the Fisher Building

PHOTO GAME ANSWERS:



THE ROYAL OAK HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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*Historical Society*

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Individual: \$20\_\_\_\_ Family: \$30\_\_\_\_ Supporter: \$50\_\_\_\_  
Century: \$100\_\_\_\_ Club: \$200\_\_\_\_ Premium: \$300\_\_\_\_ Benefactor: \$500\_\_\_\_

**Mail your check to: Royal Oak Historical Society  
1411 W. Webster Road • Royal Oak, MI 48073**

*Dues also are payable online at [royaloakhistoricalsociety.org](http://royaloakhistoricalsociety.org). Click on the Membership link and you may pay your dues online or subscribe and have your dues paid automatically annually. For more information about membership levels and benefits, visit the website. Thank you in advance!*

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