



Royal Oak Historical Society Winter 2017

www.royaloakhistoricalsociety.org

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In Memoriam

Thomas Frank Wurdock
April 3, 1931-May 31, 2015

NEW EXHIBIT!

“50 Years or So in Business in Royal Oak”

Opening Sunday, Feb. 12, 2-5 p.m.

*\$10 per-person donation at the door
Refreshments will be served*

Royal Oak Historical Society Museum
1411 W. Webster Road, Royal Oak 48073

See Page 7 for details



ROYAL OAK: THEN AND NOW

By ROHS Facebook Manager John Maurice

This is a photo of the Ralph Conselyea Building at the southeast corner of Fourth and Lafayette, Sept. 30, 1970. See Page 7 for a look at what is at that corner now!

Growing Up in Royal Oak in the 1940s-50s

By Robert Gerald Scott

Excerpted from the ROHS website
(royaloakhistoricalsociety.com).

My memories of growing up in Royal Oak in the 1940s and early '50s are like a kaleidoscope of people, places and experiences. So, I will attempt to recount them in no particular order of importance with just a few exceptions. I was born March 15, 1941, at Mount Carmel Hospital in Detroit and lived at 726 S. Washington in Royal Oak for the next 13 years of my life. Although World War II was being waged for part of this time, I was too young to be aware of it, and my time in Royal Oak proved to be a happy and fulfilling experience.

My parents were Ogle Desmond Scott and Virginia Eleanor (Ellis) Scott. They both graduated from Royal Oak High School. My dad's parents were George and Elizabeth Scott and lived on Lincoln just west of Washington. Grandfather Scott was quite significant in Royal Oak history. He was a Royal Oak constable in the 1920s, was very active in the Elks, including being the Grand Exalted Ruler. He was a Republican elector, owned Royal Oak Finance Co., and was an original stockholder of *The Royal Oak Tribune* before it became *The Daily Tribune*. He also owned significant properties around the area.

My dad was chief of the Royal Oak Volunteer Fire Department. I have memories of being awakened in the middle of the night, driving madly to the location of a fire and watching my dad help fight the fire. My mother's parents were Frances and Katherine Ellis, and during the time that I remember them, they lived on



Robert Scott (left) and Chuck Button

Lawson Street. Among other things, Frances Ellis was an excellent photographer and left behind a wonderful legacy of photos for ensuing generations to enjoy. Katherine Ellis, in addition to raising five children, was a prolific artist and specialized in oil still-life paintings.

When Grandpa Scott owned Royal Oak Finance Co., I used to walk in there from time to time. I don't remember what for, probably to say "hello" to Grandpa if he was in there. The employees would invariably greet my arrival by saying, "Well, look who's here, it's Robert Gerald Income Tax Scott" due to my birthday being on March 15, which is when taxes used to be due.

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ANSWERS TO BOB MULLER'S PHOTO GAME (See Page 5): Photo A — First Presbyterian Church on Hendrie Boulevard. Photo B — St. Mary's Catholic Church on Lafayette Avenue. Photo C — First Methodist Church on Seventh Street.

ROHS Cartoon Vault

By ROHS Board Member
Dan Saad

“Parking Peace Accord”
The Daily Tribune –
October 2, 1994

Former President Jimmy Carter had firmly established his post-presidency legacy as a global mediator and peacemaker by 1994. In this October 1994 editorial cartoon that I penned for *The Daily Tribune*, I wondered if his expertise might have been able to bring peace to the dispute over parking – the cost, limited availability and strict (some would say over the top) enforcement – in downtown Royal Oak. Well, Mr. Carter never came to Royal Oak, and 23 years later, the debate continues!

Editor’s Note: The Royal Oak Historical Society welcomes cartoonist Dan Saad to its board:

Dan Saad has been a professional cartoonist for more than 35 years. His work has appeared in Heritage newspapers, starting with The News-Herald, for more than 20 years. In addition, he has been



dan@dansaadcartoons.com

Pen Points Cartoon Blog: <http://saadcommentary.blogspot.com/>

producing editorial cartoons for Crain’s Detroit Business since 1994. In June 2005, he added the Dearborn Press & Guide to his list of client newspapers.

He began his professional career at Wayne State University, where he studied fine art and history, and worked as the editorial cartoonist at the student newspaper, The South

End, from 1972-1977.

In the past, Dan was the staff editorial cartoonist for The Daily Tribune, in Royal Oak, and his editorial cartoons have appeared regularly in The Macomb Daily, Suburban Sunday, The Advisor, The Grosse Pointe News and Heating, Cooling and Air Conditioning News.

What’s Going on at the Orson Starr House?

The Orson Starr House is a Michigan farmhouse that was originally constructed about 1845. Located at 3123 N. Main St, Royal Oak, it is one block south of 13 Mile Road. The house is owned by the City of Royal Oak and is open to the public on the second Sunday of each month, from 1 – 4 p.m. or by prior arrangement. Additional parking is available two doors to the south at the Salvation Army Citadel.

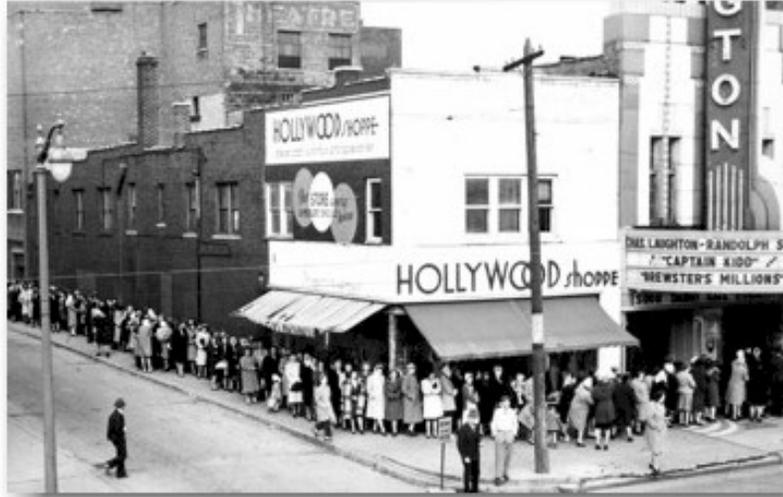
This house was occupied by the Starr Family for almost 100 years and was home to one of Royal Oak’s pioneering families. Open houses and tours are provided by the members of the Orson Starr House Guild, a volunteer committee that organizes special events at the monthly sessions.

Growing Up in Royal Oak

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Beside my family, the most significant person in my life was Charles H. “Chuckie” Button, who I met during the first day of kindergarten at Washington Grade School. I was ushered into the room and immediately ran into Chuckie, who was sweeping the floor and apparently quite proud of being entrusted with the job. From that time on, we were nearly inseparable and experienced many adventures together.

We still see each other quite often, and he is still running the Wm. L. Button Rental Co. on South Washington (more commonly known to Royal Oakers as “Button’s Rent-it”), which he purchased from his dad, William L. Button. Chuck’s dad and his mother Wilma were like a second set of parents to me since I spent so much time at their house. They were both wonderful people, and Mr. Button was a significant employer for a long time and was more proud of that than whatever amount of money he was able to make. Mrs. Button was a warm, kind person and made the best peanut butter and jelly



Women lining up for “nylon stockings” at a store on Washington circa 1947

sandwich in the whole world.

I remember many of my teachers from Washington Grade School. Mrs. Gilbert was our kindergarten teacher. I also remember Mrs. Fort, who was our library and gym teacher and made us spend a lot of time square dancing in gym class when we would have rather been playing dodgeball.

I also remember a Ms. Knowles, Mr. Lamb and Mrs. Lawson, who were all teachers of various grades. I remember most of all Mrs. Gay Connell, who was our art teacher for a few years. She was Miss MSU when she was at Michigan State University, was as nice as could be, and I adored her. I think she was one of the main reasons

that I ended up going to MSU and majoring in art.

Two of the big events at Washington Grade School each year were the Square Dance Show and the Holiday Show. The square dance event was when our parents would come and see us dance. Mrs. Fort would have a real band come in, so we were dancing to live music rather than records. Also, she would select some of us to do the “calls.” I was one of the callers and for the first time got to use a microphone. The dance that I called was “Oh Johnny Oh,” and I can still remember all the words. I practiced it endlessly at home as it

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Donations to the Royal Oak Historical Society are gratefully accepted

Send checks payable to: The Royal Oak Historical Society
1411 West Webster Road, Royal Oak, Michigan 48073
Donations are tax-deductible.

Thank you in advance.



A



B



C

Play the Photo Game

Play Bob Muller's "Photo Game." Can you identify which Royal Oak churches have these unique architectural details? (Answers on Page 2)

Photos by Bob Muller



This is my fifth-grade class picture with our teacher Mr. Lamb. Here is my best attempt to identify everyone: First row, left to right: Stuart Rose, Tommy Malden, Dale Bedoud, Billy Reid, Robbie Scott. Second row: Unknown, Judy Lunsky, Gloria Orloff, Pat Martin, Wanda ?, Candy Davidson, Buchanan ?, Janice Lunsky, Paul Snow. Third row: Mr. Lamb, Bob Straith, Judy Jewitt, Anita Horvath ?, Pat Simpson, Unknown, Nancy Goodall, Mickey Handren, John Kennedy, Chuckie Button.

Growing Up in Royal Oak

(Continued from Page 4)

would have been horrific to forget the words in front of the audience.

The Holiday Show was, of course, in December. Since many of the students in my class were Jewish, we celebrated both Christmas and Hanukkah. It was a lot of fun, and I was able to experience a lot of Jewish food, learn Hanukkah songs and play with a dreidel. We had a show for the parents where we did a play, sang songs from both cultures and also acted out plays that I think were related to the songs, such as "Good King Wenceslas." Most

everyone enjoyed it, and it was a good experience.

Editor's Note: To read more about Robert's memories of Royal Oak, go to the Royal Oak Historical Society website at royaloakhistoricalsociety.com.

Thank you to our Webmaster Mike Frentz. Here's a little background on Mike:

Mike was born to George and Alice Frentz, who lived on Cedar Hill Drive in Royal Oak. He has two older and one younger brothers and a sister. He attended Northwood Elementary School, Clara Barton Junior High and graduated from Dondero High School in 1969. All of his teen years were spent in Royal Oak as he spent a lot of his time in his family's hardware business, Frentz & Sons Hardware.

From early on, he would help his dad out on the weekends up until he was officially put on the payroll in 1967. Mike worked on and off at the hardware store until 1971 when he joined the United States Army.

He was stationed in Germany until his release in 1974 and returned home to marry Cathy Smith on March 16 of that year. He became a full-time employee at Frentz & Sons Hardware, and he and Cathy purchased a home in Berkley, where they reside today.

Mike and Cathy have three children, Kevin, Lisa and Todd. Mike is an avid runner having run the Boston Marathon, 11 Free Press Marathons and numerous 1/2 marathons, 10K's and 5K's runs. He also enjoys photography.

Royal Oak: Then and Now

Thank you to volunteer John Maurice for managing our Facebook page and for creating our new feature, Royal Oak: Then and Now.

John Maurice has lived in Royal Oak for 50 years, his entire life. He attended Jane Addams Elementary for kindergarten and then Shrine Grade School for grades 1-8. He graduated from Kimball High School in 1984 and Grand Valley State University in 1989. John & his wife, Lori, have been married for 27 years and have 3 children: Kyle 25, Brett, 22, and Samantha, 16.

John started volunteering with the Royal Oak Historical Museum in May 2016 with the primary purpose of scanning photographs from the Clawson family photo albums of the Northwood Subdivision and then assumed management of the Historical Society's Facebook page in September. John, also known around these parts as Coach John, has coached youth soccer, baseball and softball in Royal Oak for the last 18



Current view of Fourth and Lafayette

years. For his day job, John has been a property tax consultant for 20 years and works for Paradigm Tax Group in Farmington Hills.

See more fun Royal Oak photos and get the latest Royal Oak Historical Society news at [www.facebook.com/](http://www.facebook.com/RoyalOakHistoricalSociety/)

[RoyalOakHistoricalSociety/](http://www.facebook.com/RoyalOakHistoricalSociety/). “Like” us!

Curator’s Column: Busy times at the Museum

We are opening our new exhibit “Fifty Years or So in Business in Royal Oak” on Sunday, Feb. 12, 2-5 p.m. which is a change from our usual Friday evening Preview Party. This is so the owners and managers who work on Friday evenings and Saturdays will be able to attend.

As always, we will have coffee and cookies, but the best part is that you will be able to have your coffee with a member of the business family who will be attending.

This exhibit will truly be a “walk down memory lane” with some of the people who lived it. Exhibit coordinator and volunteer Glenn Klosterhaus, with the help of all the other museum volunteers, has been hard at work for the last several months contacting the almost 70 business owners they found that are still here after 50, 80 and 100-plus years.

The exhibit is filled with photos of family members, the buildings where the business started and where they moved. Most of the families

involved are in their second, third and in some cases fourth generation of family members running the business. Participating businesses have given us stories that we have reproduced and will be on display with all of the great photographs from the past — as well as artifacts from the businesses such as calendars, funeral home paper fans, matchbooks, rulers and other items that businesses gave to customers, once upon a time.

So, we hope you will spend Sunday afternoon, Feb.12, at your Historical Society Museum talking to many of the local business owners and thanking them for their decision to stay in Royal Oak.

As usual, this is a small fundraiser for the Museum so we are asking for a \$10 per-person donation at the door. No reservations necessary.

— Curator Muriel Versagi



Royal Oak Historical Society
1411 W. Webster Road
Royal Oak, MI 48073
248-439-1501
www.royaloakhistoricalsociety.com

***Royal Oak Historical Society
Membership Application***

Name _____
Address _____
Email _____
Phone _____

Individual: \$20.00 ____ Family: \$30.00 ____ Supporter: \$50.00 ____
Century: \$100 ____ Club: \$200 ____ Premium: \$300 ____ Benefactor: \$500 ____

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

*Dues are also payable online through our website www.royaloakhistoricalsociety.org.
For more information on membership levels and benefits, please visit our website.
Click on the membership link. You can pay your membership dues or subscribe to have
your dues automatically collected annually.
Thank you in advance!*