



Royal Oak Historical Society Winter 2016

www.royaloakhistoricalsociety.com

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In Memoriam

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

Join Us!

End of the Civil War

Preview Party and Fundraiser

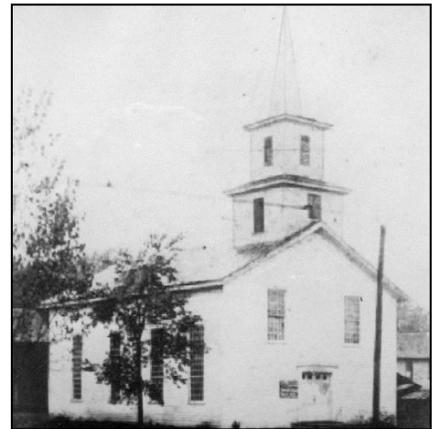
Friday, Feb. 5 at the Museum

See Page 3 for Details

First Congregational Church: An Example of the Spirit of Royal Oak

*By Mike Frentz,
ROHS Treasurer & Webmaster*

On Aug. 13, 1842, the First Congregational Church of Royal Oak was founded by Rev. Ebenezer McDowell, George Scougel, Peter Merritt, and Levi Tootill. McDowell left over his compensation which was between \$300 and \$400 a year due to the slow growth in the church up until 1867. Six other ministers served the church for the next 25 years. In 1867, a Presbyterian church at Troy Corners - “a good frame building”- was sold to the Royal Oak Congregationalists for \$300 and was moved to Main Street between Third & Fourth streets. The church served its 60



The “good frame building,” circa 1867

members at this location until 1910 when it sold the property to a group

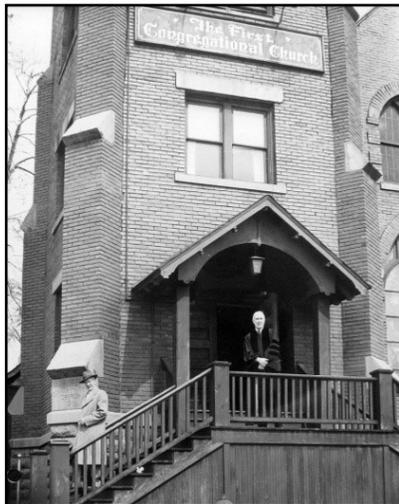
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First Congregational Church of Royal Oak

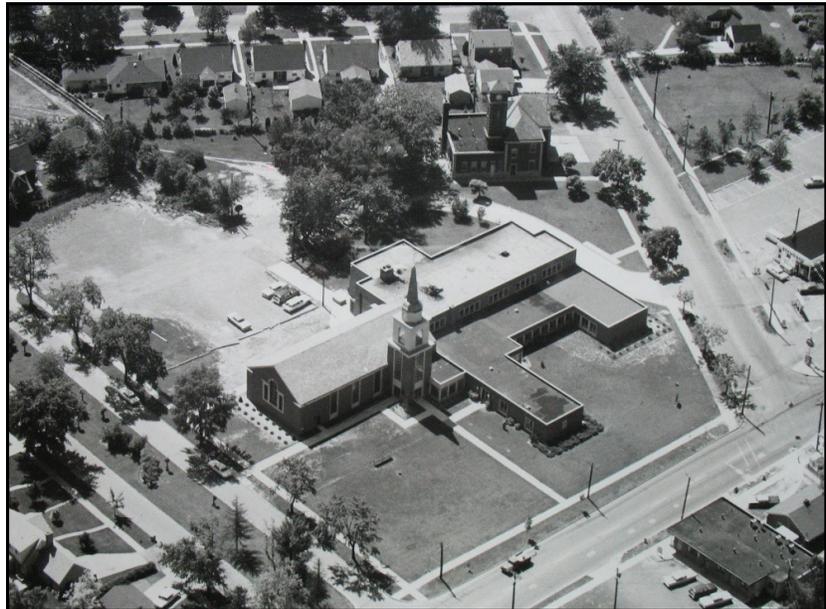
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of businessmen for \$1,000. In 1911, it was dismantled and moved to the northeast corner of Third and Center streets. In 1936, Starr Congregational Church, located on Starr Avenue (Thirteen Mile) between Crooks Road and Main Street, merged with the First Congregational Church of Royal Oak. Many believe the building at this location, which is still used as a church today, contains some of the original building materials.

The farm owned by the parents of H. Lloyd Clawson (former mayor of Royal Oak) at Webster and Crooks was gifted by him to the First Congregational Church of Royal Oak on May 8, 1950, the site of the church today. Additional lots were bought on Crooks



The church on the northeast corner of Center and 3rd streets from 1911 to 1956



Aerial view of the Crooks and Webster intersection circa 1966

and Northwood Boulevard as well as on Northwood Boulevard to Evergreen during the early 1950s. The house at 1408 Northwood Boulevard was also purchased and used as a residence for the associate pastor and rooms for the church offices, meetings and classes.

The bell that was installed in the first building on Main Street between Third and Fourth in 1906 was cast in iron by Frank R. Beale, the owner of the American Foundry Company of Northville, Michigan. It was moved to the Crooks and Webster location in 1955. It also was used in the church building at Center and Third streets up until 1940 when amplified chimes were added. It was rung officially

on August 13, 1992, by Harry Jones (now deceased) to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the church.

On Dec. 9, 1956, the church dedicated the first of three buildings constructed on the Northwood subdivision lots. It was a two-story building which consisted of a Social Hall (used for church services) and a kitchen on the first floor, four Sunday school rooms on the second floor and a service area in the basement. In 1959, an addition east of this building was completed. It consisted of a fellowship room with a kitchenette, library, offices, and two classrooms.

(Continued on Page 4)

Royal Oak Historical Society's

End of the Civil War

Preview Party and Fundraiser



*Friday, February 5th at 7pm
\$15 per person*

*Join us at the museum for desserts,
beverages, and to meet President
Abraham Lincoln*

*1411 W Webster
Royal Oak, 48073
www.royaloakhistoricalsociety.org
248-439-1501*

*Exhibit portrays the end of the Civil War through pictures and documents
Runs through mid-May*

First Congregational Church of Royal Oak

(Continued from Page 2)

In 1963, the nave, narthex and chancel were constructed along with an additional 30 by 60 foot classroom bordering Webster. The bell tower and spire were built on the ground during the construction. A large crowd of onlookers watched from the front lawn as the bell tower was lifted by crane up to its resting place. This addition was dedicated on Feb. 2, 1964. The total investment by the church for the building that stands today was \$600,000.

In 1974, the Highland Park First Congregational Church merged with the First Congregational Church of Royal Oak. First Congregational Church of Royal Oak has been a vital part of the Northwood Subdivision for 59 years. It continues to serve as an iconic anchor as well as provide a strong religious foundation for the area and for Royal Oak.



The dedication of the new bell tower on Feb 2, 1964

Photos courtesy of First Congregational Church of Royal Oak

The Spirit of Royal Oak Award is presented to a business or organization dedicated to serving its patrons, the Royal Oak Historical Society and the community as an ongoing commitment to excellence. The establishment or organization should be active in supporting the various clubs and organizations, and

recognize and proclaim the historical significance of being a long-standing business or organization in the local community. The 2015 Spirit of Royal Oak Award was presented to the First Congregational Church of Royal Oak at the Royal Oak Historical Society's Annual Dinner in October.

ROYAL OAK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1411 W. Webster, Royal Oak MI 48073

248-439-1501

royaloakhistoricalsociety.org

Hours Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, 1-4 p.m.

Your Museum needs you for support! We are an all-volunteer membership organization dedicated to preserving our local history.

We welcome donations and volunteers!

Like us on Facebook!

History Research Help Needed

Regarding Early Royal Oak Judges Brondige, Sevald, Renton, Hartwig or Osgood

The Royal Oak Historical Society Museum has very little information on the Royal Oak Court and needs your help. In 1921, John E. Brondige was appointed the Justice of the Peace. In 1949, Judge Brondige and William Sevald became Municipal Judges. In 1955, Judge Fletcher Renton was elected as a Municipal Court Judge.

In 1959, Judge Keith Leenhouts and Elmer Hartwig were elected and later became the first District Court Judges for the 44th District Court. In 1970, Judge John Osgood was elected. They were followed by Francis X. O'Brien, John R. Mann, Daniel Sawicki, Terrence Brennan, Judge Derek Meinecke, and most recently, Judge Jamie Wittenburg.

If any family members or friends of the earlier Judges: Brondige, Sevald, Renton, Hartwig or Osgood would have some information or pictures that we could use for our History of the Royal Oak Court, please call recently retired Court Administrator of the 44th District Court, Kevin Sutherland (248-931-7031).

Judge Meinecke and Kevin Sutherland are working on a permanent exhibit to be displayed in the new 44th District Courthouse. Please help.....

Call Kevin Sutherland, 248-931-7032.

Thanks to our Annual Dinner Sponsors!

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Come Visit Our Library!

*By Cindy Flack,
ROHS Museum Librarian*

When you walk into the Royal Oak Historical Museum's library, you see a beautifully paneled oak room with a Faience-tiled floor. The building was originally the Northwood Fire Station converted to a museum in 2010. The present library was the recreation room for the firefighters. David Poduska restored the library in 2009-2010 as his Eagle Scout Project. He raised money and organized volunteers to bring this room back to life.

Part of George Dondero's Abraham Lincoln collection has found a new home here. We have an authenticated paper showing that John S. Ennis, a young Confederate prisoner of war, signed an oath of allegiance to the United States of America, resulting in his release from a POW camp in January 1864. President Abraham Lincoln accepted the pledge and signed his discharge papers. The Dondero collection includes various books and documents pertaining to the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln. Other do-

nors have added to the collection.

The library shelves are also lined with personal narratives of families that settled Royal Oak Township, including the Starr family, Erb family, Lawson family, Gabler family, and Finch family, just to name a few.

You will find a variety of books on the history of the state of Michigan, Oakland and Wayne counties.

We have an extensive collection of yearbooks from all of Royal Oak public high schools. The first issue of the OAK dates to 1920. The volumes extend to 2004. The collection also includes yearbooks from St. Mary's, Shrine High School, some elementary schools and middle schools.

We have collections of the Acorn, a high school newspaper, dating back to 1915, and the Herald, to 2008. The library has a selection of school textbooks: "Juvenile Mental Math" (1865), a "McGuffey Reader" (1880), "Dick & Jane" (1951), "New Family Atlas of the World" (1885), and many more.

We have a variety of books written by local authors. Our

collection includes scrapbooks and information about local clubs: Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Masons, Shriners, Lions Club, Soroptomists, Eagles, Woman's Club.

We have U.S. history, WWI, WWII, military history, Detroit Zoo history, Red Run history, churches of Royal Oak history, city management history and city government history.

We have bound volumes of the Daily Tribune from 1917-1965, for you to read.

Artifacts in our library include: George Dondero's desk with a hidden typewriter, DeWald television, circa 1948, the first television sold in Royal Oak, several old radios, and a Victrola Talking Machine (with records).

Come in, browse, enjoy. Your donations are welcome.

Cindy Flack is a volunteer in the library at the Royal Oak Historical Museum. She taught elementary school for 35 years and retired two years ago. Working in the museum has fulfilled a lifelong passion for history. Cindy and her husband Mike have lived in Royal Oak for 33 years.

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.

Royal Oak History Books for Sale **At Frentz Hardware**

All proceeds go to the Museum

“My Royal Oak: Images From the 20th Century” (2008), the book on Royal Oak history that is heavy on historic images of our town, is a must for anyone who loves Royal Oak. Printed on glossy white paper, it contains 227 photographs on 128 pages and is 7x10 inches. The text consists of more than 17,000 words about the “old” town most of us remember in fragments. This is a very personal book, with many of my memories of growing up in Royal Oak in the 20th century. The cost is only \$25.

Everyone should have “Twigs and Acorns, Plus” (2007), the much-loved scrapbook style presentation about our town since its founding more than 180 years ago. It contains newspaper articles, previously unpublished letters, essays, etc. and photos of early Royal Oak. At \$40, the book is 425 pages, hardbound and fully indexed.

If you are going to explore historic Royal Oak or St. Mary cemeteries, you must have the 12-page edition of “Cemeteries Walking Tour” (2007), containing photographs and the locations of thousands of people interred in the two cemeteries arranged in a surname index, available for \$5.

“To Walk That Old Indian Trail” has been a very popular booklet over the years, originally prepared for the 75th anniversary of our city in 1996. In 2007, the 12-page edition contains far more information on Native American traces in Royal Oak and features a Chief on the cover. At \$5, it is a bargain.

All the books are available at Frentz’s Hardware, and at our beautiful Historical Society Museum. As with all of my other books, all proceeds go to the Museum. Purchasing these books is simply a GIFT to the Museum.

Coming soon is a small book to be published on Northwood Subdivision (tentatively – “Northwood Subdivision and The Clawsons”), which will include the No. 2 Fire Station (site of the Historical Museum), the old and new Northwood Schools, the Clawson family, GTW Railroad, the First Congregational Church and the Shrine of the Little Flower Church, etc. Contained inside will be essays on each subject and a number of rare historic photographs. Watch for it! - *By David G. Penney, Ph.D.*

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.



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 _____

Individual: \$10.00 ____ Family: \$18.00 ____ Donor: \$25.00 ____ Benefactor: \$50.00 ____
Seniors: 60+: \$8.00 _____

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.
Click on the membership link. You can pay your membership dues or subscribe to have
your dues automatically collected annually.*

Thank you in advance!