



Royal Oak Historical Society Summer 2015

www.royaloakhistoricalsociety.com

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Muriel Versagi

*Newsletter Editor: Trish Oliver
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Mailing: Muriel Versagi*

In Memoriam

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

Curator's Corner

We're No 1!

What a pleasant surprise the Museum received in June 2015! The readers of The Oakland Press and The Daily Tribune voted the Royal Oak Historical Society Museum the “Best of the Best” in the Museum category in the Southeast Michigan area. The Clawson House Museum tied for second with the DIA; the Troy Historical Village was third.

This is a huge tribute to the all-volunteer crew at the ROHS Museum. We work very hard to bring three to four interesting and informative exhibits each year, as well as Town Halls and other programs throughout the year. We also welcome countless visitors each year during our regular Museum hours: 1-4 p.m. Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays.

Please come visit on August 1, 2015, for our Fourth Annual Car Show (for more, see Page 3), and the opening of our new exhibit, “Woodward Memories.” Check out our website (www.royaloakhistoricalsociety.org), maintained by volunteer and ROHS treasurer, Mike Frentz, and like us on Facebook!

—Muriel Versagi



Streetcars on Washington

ROHS Treasurer Mike Frentz shares his “Interurban Recollections” on Page 2. Streetcar photos (above and Page 2) from the collection of the Royal Oak Historical Society Museum.

Interurban Recollections

*By Mike Frenz,
ROHS Treasurer and
Webmaster*

Over the years, I've heard a lot of stories about the streetcars and interurban cars that ran through Royal Oak. The piece of rail that is at the museum is from Main at Crooks where the interurban cars started their journeys to Imlay City and Bay City. It was removed by city workers back in the '80s when they were doing some repair work on the road.

I believe the streetcars and interurban cars used the same tracks, and both were electrified.

North Main Animal Hospital's waiting room was actually the station for passengers for the interurban. They have a picture there showing what it looked like back then.

Catalpa and Main Street was a spur, sometimes called a wye. This was the end of the line going north for the streetcars. Going further north required getting off the streetcar and walking to the interurban station further down on Main and getting on an interurban car. The streetcars would back in from Main Street to Catalpa and then pull forward onto Main. There were two sets of tracks throughout the system for north and south traffic and



Catalpa & Main Spur

east-west traffic.

The interurban cars would travel the long distances, so the cars were larger and more comfortable. They would travel to northern cities such as Port Huron, Imlay City, Pontiac, Flint, Saginaw and Bay City, western cities like Ann Arbor, Jackson, Lansing, Battle Creek, Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids, and also south to Toledo and Ohio.

This is why Frenz & Sons Hardware is where it is today at the intersection of Main and Catalpa. My dad's family had relatives living in Imlay City. They lived in Detroit at the time and would ride the Detroit streetcar to Main and Catalpa to transfer to the interurban heading to Imlay City. In 1932 my dad, George, and his father, saw that the

hardware store across the street was for sale and a few months later bought it.

A story I remember hearing from Bill Thompson, an employee of my dad from the late '30s up until the '90s, was about him and another employee, Bill Schmidt (Smitty).

They would go across the street to Dean's Drug Store, which had a soda bar, for a cup of coffee. Dean's was on the southwest corner of Catalpa and Main next to the wye. The streetcar driver would back up the streetcar into the spur to turn it around but would first get out and run into Dean's to use the bathroom. Bill and Smitty would go out and disconnect the trolley pole from the overhead

(Please see Page 4)



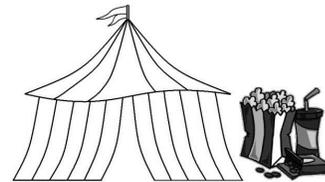
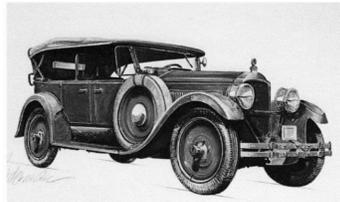
Royal Oak Historical Society Museum and The First Congregational Church

PRESENTS:

4th Annual Car Show and Commencement of Michigan's Automotive Heritage Month

Saturday August 1, 2015, 11AM to 5PM

The Royal Oak Historical Museum will have on display views of Woodward Avenue as it appeared in the 1900's to its present day image.



The collection of Robert Edwards original automotive concept art will be on exhibit, along with the automobile tempura paintings of Jerome Biederman.

Music by Chris Wietzke and Jaime Burean.

Food, popcorn, fun and games provided by, the Museum and
The First Congregational Church of Royal Oak.

Car Show Registration Fee: \$20.00

Pre-register at the Royal Oak Historical Society Museum at
Webster and Crooks.

1411 Webster, Royal Oak, MI 48073

Or online at royaloakhistoricalsociety.com

For more information call: 248-439-1501

Dash plaques given to first 100 entries.

All proceeds to the Royal Oak Historical Society Museum and
The First Congregational Church of Royal Oak.

1411 Webster
Royal Oak, MI 48073



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.

Interurban Recollections

(Continued from Page 2)

wire, walk back to the hardware, look out the window and watch the streetcar driver try to start the car moving, get out and look around for the kids that disconnected the pole!

There is also a story on the Royal Oak Historical Society's website by Reynolds Smith: "Another good feature of Dean's was that it was right at the turn-around for the interurban trolley cars, and we would go outside and watch them turn up the short spur on Catalpa and then back up north on Main Street before heading south to Detroit. It was fun to see the sparks fly when the electrical contact wheel was connected to the overhead power wire." *(Banker Reynolds L. Smith worked for the former Guardian Bank of Royal Oak at the southwest corner of Main and Fourth streets (now occupied by jewelry store Metals in Time) from 1938 to 1981 and rose up through the ranks from messenger boy to Vice President in Charge of Investments. His Royal Oak recollections can be found at <http://www.royaloakhistoricalociety.com/RRO/RRoreynoldslsmith.html>.)*

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.

Excavating Royal Oak

By Bob Muller,
ROHS Board Member

When I was a boy (in the early '50s), a length of street-car track was visible at Fourth and Washington polished shiny by car tires. My father, who remembered the inter-urban and the streetcars, would tell me about it.

I was amazed recently to see that an unbelievable length of track is visible on Washington prior to repaving. A hundred years ago, the streets of Royal Oak were filled with light rail — an idea that is coming back to life today.

I am pleased to share maps of the old "light rail." As the close-up map on the right of downtown Royal Oak shows, the main track left Woodward on Washington, went up to the



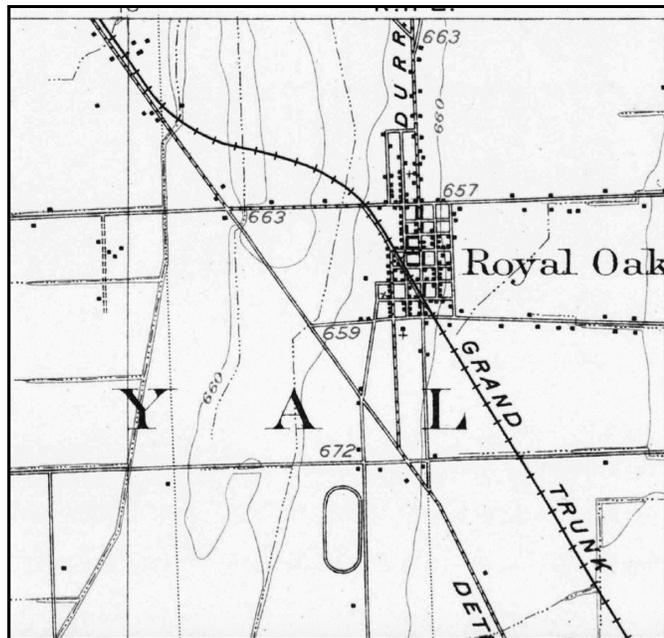
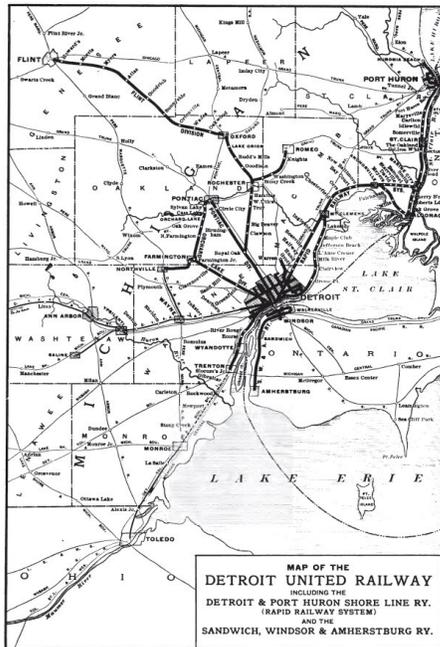
Streetcar tracks revealed at Seventh and Washington during repaving (above photo: Bob Muller). See the maps below.

railroad tracks, followed them to 11 Mile and back to Woodward and then on to Birmingham -- it also went over Fourth Street to Main, then north to Rochester and Flint

(Source: US Geographical Survey Michigan Rochester Quadrangle Survey 1906, Printed 1908). (Source for the Detroit Urban Railway map on the left: McGraw Electric

Railway Manual: The Reg Book of American Street Railway Investments, Frederic Nicholas, McGraw Publishing Company, 1904, Issue 11).

Editor's Note: Thank you to Royal Oak resident — and avid historian — Tim Soboleski for letting us know that the tracks had been revealed on Washington while it was being prepped for repaving.



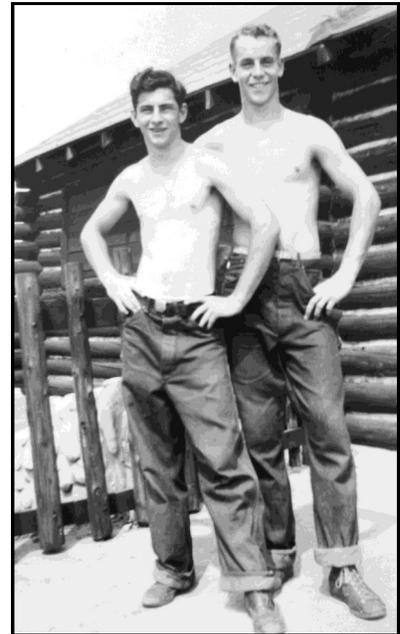
Serendipity at the Museum

*By Cindy Flack,
ROHS Museum Librarian*

Harry Cavanaugh and his daughter, Carolyn Ginotti, entered the Royal Oak Historical Museum, April 30, 2015. They were looking for a picture of Harry's father, who had played on a Royal Oak baseball team about 1915.

As we looked for information, the conversation turned to Harry. He said he graduated from St. Mary's of Royal Oak High School. I knew my friend's dad Ted (Theodore) Klapperich had also graduated from that school. I mentioned the name to Harry, and he replied, "Did I know him? He was my best friend in high school!" They had both graduated with the Class of 1942. They played on the same sports teams. In baseball, Harry had been the pitcher and Ted had been catcher. In football, Harry had been the running back, and Ted had been the quarterback.

Sensing something big could happen here, I put Carolyn (Cavanaugh) Ginotti in touch with Terry (Klapperich) Hotke. Thank God for cell phones. Right then and there in the Museum, they made arrangements to get their fathers together Saturday, May 2. They both recalled how



Ted Klapperich & Harry Cavanaugh (in Notre Dame sweatshirt) at the Museum (photo top left, credit Carolyn Ginotti); Harry & Ted at Camp Sancta Maria in Gaylord in the 1940s (photo top right, courtesy of Carolyn Ginotti); Harry Cavanaugh, Rita Simons and Ted Klapperich (photo above, credit Carolyn Ginotti)

over the years, as old stories were retold in their homes, Harry and Ted's names kept popping up. Now, after 73 years, they would be able to see the men in person!

And what a reunion it was! Another Museum volunteer

Rita (Lasko) Simons was there for the reunion. She had known Harry and Ted from high school days. Her younger brothers had palled around with Harry and Ted. As the three graduates sat around the
(See Page 7)



Ted Klapperich, his daughter Terry Klapperich-Hotke, Museum Librarian Cindy Flack, Harry Cavanaugh, Rita Simons with back to us (photo, Carolyn Ginotti)

Serendipity

(Continued from Page 6)

lunchroom table, extended family members watched and listened. Harry Cavanaugh had brought his pride and joy — his scrapbook from high school. There were pictures of school games and friends. One picture, taken at the Sancta Maria Summer Camp in Gaylord, brought some chuckles. The boys had worked there one summer as wait staff and slept over the garage. Youthful pranks and adventures were fondly remembered.

Graduation came and soon after, WWII. Upon graduation in 1942, Harry volunteered for service. He was sent to Europe with the 3rd Calvary Reconnaissance unit. Harry was shot in the right foot, sent to a hospital, recuperated and returned to finish the war. While in Germany, his unit was ordered to hold the bridge at Thionville. They were there to liberate the Ebensee concentration camp.

Ted went to Michigan State University in 1942. He was drafted in early 1943 and sent to

medical training. He was shipped overseas. While in northern Germany, his unit came upon the Dachau concentration camp. These were events one never forgets. Not long after, he was assisting a wounded soldier when a bomb exploded, sending shrapnel through his left hand. He went off to a hospital and was given a ticket home.

After the war, Harry and Ted returned home and began their post-war lives. Each man married, raised a family, and carried on. The past and present remained separate until the serendipitous visit of Harry Cavanaugh to the Royal Oak Historical Museum looking for a 1915 picture of his dad playing baseball.

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. They have raised two sons into fine young men. Besides all things history, Cindy also enjoys gardening, reading, and biking.



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!*

See you there!

Car Month Kickoff!

**Royal Oak Historical Society &
First Congregational Church
Saturday, August 1**

Make a day of it!

Cowbell Run — 8 AM
Car show at the Museum
11 AM – 5 PM
Kids activities and music at the church
10 AM—5 PM
(1314 Northwood Boulevard)

Something for Everyone!

A great kickoff to the Dream Cruise!