



# ROYAL OAK *Historical Society*

FEBRUARY 2026 • ROYALOAKHISTORICALSOCIETY.COM



*Sign of the Beefeater restaurant on Woodward Avenue north of Eleven Mile Road prior to 1979, when a lawsuit forced the name change to Sign of the Beefcarver.*

## SIGN OF THE BEEFCARVER: A LIVING RELIC OF A BYGONE ERA

BY DON CALLIHAN

**CAFETERIA-STYLE RESTAURANTS** were once a staple across the country, beginning in the 1920s and reaching their peak in the 1950s and 1960s. Throughout metro Detroit, popular places included Greenfield's in Birmingham, Sanders in downtown Detroit, Samuel Bros. in Eastern Market, and Machus in Birmingham. One long-standing non-institutional cafeteria remains, Sign of the Beefcarver on Woodward in Royal Oak.

The restaurant was founded in 1957 by two young entrepreneurs, Jack Joliat and Bob LaJoie. Both partners earned their college degrees in 1948 — Bob in economics and Jack in business administration. They met when Jack began dating Bob's sister, Rosemary. When the two married in 1949, Jack and Bob became family.

Bob's marriage was also significant, as he married Mary Jane Bell, the daughter of John Clifford Bell, the legendary owner of Cliff Bell's Supper Club, now operating again in downtown Detroit after a 20-year hiatus. Bob met Mary Jane while working at the club. His club experience and his marriage to the boss's daughter provided the partnership with both restaurant

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## Edward J. Wolfrum: Royal Oak's Boy Genius

By John S. Schultz

**AT AGE 5**, he took apart his family's phone, then reassembled it. As a teen, his dad came home from work on day to find parts of a car engine scattered across the driveway.

These were the early signs of a young boy with an eager appetite to see how things worked and whether he could make them function better. His name was Edward J. Wolfrum, and he was on his way to becoming one of the top sound engineers during Detroit's emergence as a major music center in the early 1960s and '70s.

*Ed Wolfrum, age 14, in 1960, at his radio station in his basement.*

Born December 30, 1945, he was adopted and grew up in Royal Oak on Ferris Street, south of Twelve Mile. He attended St. Mary's schools and graduated from St. Mary High School

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EUCHRE NIGHT, Friday, February 27 at Pronto! Play starts at 7 p.m. Register at [royaloakhistoricalsociety.com](http://royaloakhistoricalsociety.com).

ROYAL OAK  
*Historical Society*

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

EXHIBITS

Black History Month  
"Freedom Seekers"  
Through February

"Where They Lie: Stories that  
Royal Oak Cemeteries Tell"  
Opens March 22

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

# President's Message

BY TOM TOGGWEILER

**GREETINGS FROM THE** Historical Society Board, our volunteer staff, and all our dedicated researchers who keep our museum thriving. I want to thank everyone who dedicates their time and effort, as well as those who contribute resources to our work of preserving our city's history and educating others about our past.

Our goal in 2026 is to continue offering events, displays, and speakers at the museum that bring our city's history to life for both members and the public. Our speaker programs will continue this month, held on the second Friday of each month. Among other things, we aim to educate our attendees about Royal Oak's Cemetery, the history of our courthouse, Royal Oak Schools' Hall of Fame, and more throughout the year.

Additionally, we aim to welcome 250 new members this year to celebrate the nation's 250th anniversary. To get started, we're celebrating Presidents Day with a special event from 2-4 p.m. on February 15 at the museum. See *Page 12* for details and exclusive membership pricing.

The Royal Oak Historical Society is also excited to partner with the Michigan America 250! committee and the City of Royal Oak to celebrate the nation's semiquincentennial anniversary over the Fourth of July weekend. We have coordinated our celebration with the downtown Taco Fest. John Witz, the event's sponsor, along with the local Ezra Parker Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, are helping to promote our history. Stay tuned for more details as plans are finalized.

**WE WILL HOST ANOTHER** Euchre tournament on Friday, February 27, at Pronto! Diner in downtown Royal Oak. This event is fun and a great way to meet new friends. The cost is \$25 per player. Check our Facebook page and website for details and to sign up. Prizes are awarded to the top three players of the evening, and light refreshments are included.

Our popular Granny's Attic sale is scheduled for Saturday, May 30. It is an easy way to clear your home of items no longer in use, donate them, and just maybe find a new treasure you just must have. Details will be announced soon.

It is both an honor and a challenge for me to represent such an important part of our city's heritage. Members of the board, our volunteer staff, and our curator, Johanna Schurrer, pledge every day to fulfill our goal of preserving and showcasing our city's history. We truly appreciate the support of all our members. We couldn't do what we do without everyone's assistance.

Come visit our museum and consider becoming a member to support us.

May you all have a warm and peaceful rest of the winter. Summer is coming; it just might take a while. 🌸

## SPEAKER SERIES — 7 p.m. at the museum

Tickets: \$15. Go to [royaloakhistoricalsociety.com](http://royaloakhistoricalsociety.com) and look under Events.

**Friday, February 13** — *Dividing a District*

Melissa Moore will discuss how the formation of Southeast Oakland County, national housing conventions, and one city's push for "Neighborhood Schools" districting led to the first federal school anti-segregation lawsuit in the North.

Melissa holds a Master of Arts in History with specialization in contemporary Detroit history and a Master's of Library and Information Science from Wayne State University. She is Head of Access Services at the Ferndale Area District Library.

**Friday, March 13** — *Royal Oak Cemeteries*

Amy Elliott Bragg, director of the Historic Elmwood (cemetery) Foundation, will talk about the three cemeteries in Royal Oak in coordination with the opening of the exhibit "Where They Lie: Stories that Royal Oak Cemeteries Tell," which opens on Sunday, March 22. The exhibit on the history of our city's three cemeteries will run through July.



# Curator's Corner

BY JOHANNA SCHURRER

**WE HAD A VERY SUCCESSFUL** year in 2025. Our marketing volunteer, Lish Dorset, is doing a wonderful job reaching out to local communities to promote our programs, events, and exhibits.

Our exhibit openings were well attended and successful, and we also saw an increase in walk-in visitors during the museum's open hours. In November, the South Oakland Art Association held its annual art show at the museum, selling many paintings and smaller works.

This year's exhibits will start this month with "Black History Month," followed by the opening of "Where They Lie: Stories that Royal Oak Cemeteries Tell" on Sunday, March 22. The exhibit on the history of our city's three cemeteries will run through July. In August, we will have our annual Car Show, and from September through October, we will have an exhibit on the history of *The Daily Tribune*. Check our website later in the year of the opening date.

Our Centennial Home Certificate program, which began in 2025 for residents with homes built in 1925 or earlier, was another successful initiative. We will carry on with the program in 2026 for homes that are at least 100 years old. All relevant information will be available on our website and posted on Facebook. You can register by emailing your name and address to [curator@royaloakhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:curator@royaloakhistoricalsociety.org). Certificates can be picked up at the Royal Oak Historical Museum on March 22 during the opening of "Where They Lie: Stories that Royal Oak Cemeteries Tell."

In November, we distributed flyers asking if people were interested in becoming docents at the museum. Then, volunteer Don Drife and I began a four-week training program. Twelve people signed up, and now nine new docents have joined our museum staff.

**IN DECEMBER**, Santa arrived at the museum on a fire truck and greeted more than 150 children and parents, along with the Royal Oak Children's Choir. The children talked with Santa, enjoyed cookies and hot chocolate, and each child received a bag of treats prepared by museum volunteer Lee Potter. In early January, I hosted Cub Scout Pack Number 1604 at the museum, where they worked on two merit badge projects. One was building "yogurt cup speakers," and the other involved examining architectural drawings as part of the requirements for the engineer badge. I showed them the 1928 architectural drawings of Washington Elementary School and explained how to read and understand them. I was amazed at what they were able to understand. Den leader Rebecca Mandzak commented, "I think we might have a future engineer and/or architect in our group."

Finally, I want to thank all those who donated to the Museum Management Fund once again. Besides several new exhibit panels, we were able to purchase two new display cases to replace older, broken ones for our collections. We also bought oversize acid-free boxes to help protect our scrapbook collection. Additionally, the archives received a large donation of archival folders and boxes from a private foundation for our smaller photograph and document collections. 🌱



**A Cub Scout from Pack 1604 goes over blueprints from Washington Elementary School with curator Johanna Schurrer.**

## From Our Collections



A 1934 Cyclone Seed Sower. Made by the Cyclone Seeder Company of Urbana, Indiana. The company was founded in 1868 by Samuel S. Speicher and, specialized in seeding and fertilizer spreaders. The company was bought out in 1977 by Jackson Manufacturing Company.

The canvas sack was filled with the desired seed. A metal centrifugal seeder with a crank attached to the bottom of the board could be adjusted for the type/size of seed. Turning the crank caused the seed to be thrown from the front of the unit in a "broadcast" pattern, a quicker and more efficient method of planting crops. — *Leslie S. Edwards*



## Sign of the Beefcarver • Continued from Page 1



*Mac's Drive-In as it looked in the summer of 1957 before being partially demolished and rebuilt into the Sign of Beefeater.*



*The original interior featured colonial oak dining tables and chairs and antique wall decor. The dining room looks much the same today.*

on the board, "The big cheeses from Wisconsin are here." The board drew much attention and built anticipation for the restaurant's opening.

As the building neared completion, it was outfitted with subdued lighting, colonial oak dining tables and chairs, and antique wall adornments ranging from cooking utensils to garden tools. Overhead spotlights illuminated the stainless-steel cafeteria line, showcasing the salads, beef round, entrees, sides, and desserts that would be available.

The restaurant welcomed the public for the first time on Saturday, November 23, 1957. Diners were delighted to find that, as they reached the end of the serving line, white-uniformed, girl-next-door-type waitresses carried their trays to a table while they paid their check. Seven weeks later, on January 15, 1958, the partners held their grand opening. To highlight the cozy, colonial atmosphere, the entire staff wore Early American costumes.

**THE RESTAURANT ADVERTISED**, "home-cooked, roasted or baked, never fried." Everyday entrees included roast beef au jus, oven-baked New England scrod (sourced from Finland), and spaghetti with meat sauce. Three or four other entrees, which varied by day of the week, were also available.

It didn't take long for the restaurant to gain popularity. Its hand-carved roast beef, extensive salad bar, homemade soups, and classic desserts like rice pudding and fruit pies, along with its unique mid-century dining experience, drew customers from all over the area.

Although the partners had always intended to open multiple locations, it took until 1966 to secure financial backing, hire an architect to prepare design drawings, acquire land, and build two new restaurants. First to open was Eastland, located on East Eight Mile at Kelley Road in East Detroit (Eastpointe today). The Detroit location, on West Eight Mile, west Southfield Road, opened a few months later. These restaurants and all future restaurants were much larger than the original Royal Oak location.

The chain continued to expand and, by 1972, had eight restaurants in metro Detroit. At that time, many major U.S. corporations were diversifying into unrelated businesses, an approach intended to reduce risk, promote growth, and put surplus cash to use. One of those corporations was Montgomery Ward, a department store/catalog operation that was a minor second to Sears, Roebuck & Co. Ward's acquired the Sign of the Beefeater restaurants in 1972. It was structured as a wholly owned subsidiary, and partners Lajoie and Joliat were kept on to run the operation.

experience and essential business connections. Jack's business experience included working in his dad's tire store, at an employment agency, and at several printing companies.

**THE PAIR DELIBERATELY** selected criteria for their restaurant. In the 1950s, beef was the most popular meat served in restaurants. At country clubs and formal banquets, the prominent cut of beef, known as the Steamship Round, was a striking presentation, displayed bone-in and carved to order.

They wanted to offer this presentation at an affordable price, and a cafeteria format was a way to do so. Cafeterias can generate high-volume sales while remaining profitable at lower margins. They were also beneficial to diners, who could either enjoy a leisurely meal or get in and out quickly. Incorporating a warm, colonial ambiance would further enhance the dining experience.

Then there was the matter of what to name the restaurant. They wanted to emphasize beef in the name and chose "Sign of the Beefeater" to suggest someone who eats beef. A cartoonish colonist, with a wink, wearing a three-cornered hat and holding a fork and a spoon, became the restaurant's logo.

**IN THE SUMMER OF 1957**, the partners acquired a building on the east side of Woodward Avenue, just north of Eleven Mile Road, that had been Mac's Drive-In. The building was partially demolished and rebuilt with interior brick walls, a fireplace, and exposed beams to provide a colonial ambiance. An 8-foot-by-8-foot blackboard, visible to northbound Woodward traffic, was set up to report day-to-day construction progress, setbacks, and whimsical news. One day, when Bob LaJoie had house guests from Manitowoc, Wisconsin, he wrote



## Sign of the Beefcarver • Continued from Page 1

Under Ward's ownership, eight more Sign of the Beefeater restaurants were built, four in the Chicago area and four more in metro Detroit. At the chain's peak, it was announced that it could no longer use "beefeater" in its name. To understand why, we must turn the clock back 20 years, when there was only the original restaurant.

**IN 1959, THE DISTILLER** of Beefeater Gin, James Burroughs Ltd., contended that the restaurant's use of the term "beefeater" created a "likelihood of confusion," even though the restaurant did not sell alcoholic beverages and its logo character did not resemble a Beefeater, the Yeoman Warders who were historically responsible for guarding prisoners and protecting the Crown Jewels at the Tower of London and who are depicted on the label of Beefeater Gin. The partners initially ignored the threat and kept the beefeater name. At the time, Beefeater Gin was the country's largest-selling imported gin and had been exported to the United States since 1909, except during Prohibition. The company trademarked the Beefeater name in 1933.

In 1966, when the London-based company took a more aggressive stance, the restaurant sought to register its name with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. The application languished for the next 10 years before the restaurant's request was denied. Following the rejection, James Burroughs Ltd. sued the restaurant chain. A final judgment was rendered in September 1978, requiring the chain to pay unspecified damages and change its name by March 1, 1979. The name change was not announced to the public until a cleverly worded headline, "Gin wins name game after a 20-year beef," appeared in the January 12, 1979, edition of the *Detroit Free Press*. The accompanying story outlined the dispute's history and noted that the restaurant would be renamed "Sign of the Beefcarver." It also stated that Montgomery Ward was selling off its restaurant businesses.

In the wake of the name change, a patron reportedly entered Bedell's restaurant on Woodward, north of Square Lake Road (currently The Moose Preserve), and ordered a Beefcarver martini. Hopefully, this provided some solace for Joliat and LaJoie when it was reported in the *Detroit Free Press*.

**WITH THE NEW NAME** and the chain up for sale, Jack Joliat assembled a management team, including himself and some of his managers, to reacquire the chain. Their first action was to close the Chicago-area locations and focus on the 12 restaurants across metro Detroit. Bob LaJoie was dealing with a serious illness at the time and opted out of the deal. He recovered but later died on October 27, 2017, at age 92.

Five years later, as all metro Detroit locations were cruising along, a fire significantly damaged the Royal Oak location on December 9, 1984. Like all locations, Royal Oak slow-roasted its standing rounds of beef overnight while the restaurant was closed. While roasting was in progress, a malfunctioning thermostat caused the oven to overheat, spattering grease onto an adjacent wall and igniting it. The south half of the building was destroyed, and the north half was extensively damaged. Royal Oak Fire Marshal Roy Pingilley said that Jack Joliat was very upset by the fire. "He took it more to heart because it was the original building. He had helped build that building."

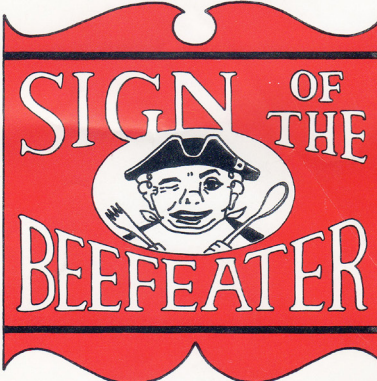


**A malfunctioning thermostat on a roasting oven caused an extensive fire on December 9, 1984. The rebuilt restaurant reopened in September 1985. Photo by The Daily Tribune.**

chain had its restaurants too close together. The first to close was the Detroit location on West Eight Mile in 1994. Nine more closed by the end of 2004, leaving the Dearborn and Royal Oak locations open. Dearborn closed in 2018, leaving only the original restaurant on Woodward still operating.

The Sign of the Beefcarver is Royal Oak's oldest restaurant, having been in business for nearly 70 years. Loyal customers and a friendly staff, many of whom have worked there for 20-plus years, keep the Sign of the Beefcarver successful. 🍷

**Ten years and  
3 million beefeaters ago  
we hung our first sign**



**Now, thousands of tons of beef roast later, more and more beefeaters come to enjoy this certain treat:**

- Tender beef roast sliced to order
- Hearty salads with your choice of a dozen dressings
- Tasty vegetables in savourie sauces
- Hearthbaked pies and apple dumplings
- Early American hospitality

Make the SIGN OF THE BEEFEATER your beefeating habit. Lunches and dinners are ready now at

**ROAST BEEF**  
\$1.05

DETROIT  
EAST DETROIT  
ROYAL OAK  
DEARBORN  
ALLEN PARK

Eight Mile just W. of Southfield  
Eight Mile at Kelly Road  
Woodward just N. of Eleven Mile  
Michigan Ave. at Outer Drive  
Opening early 1968

**NO LIQUOR**

**Advertisement from 1968 in The Daily Tribune.**

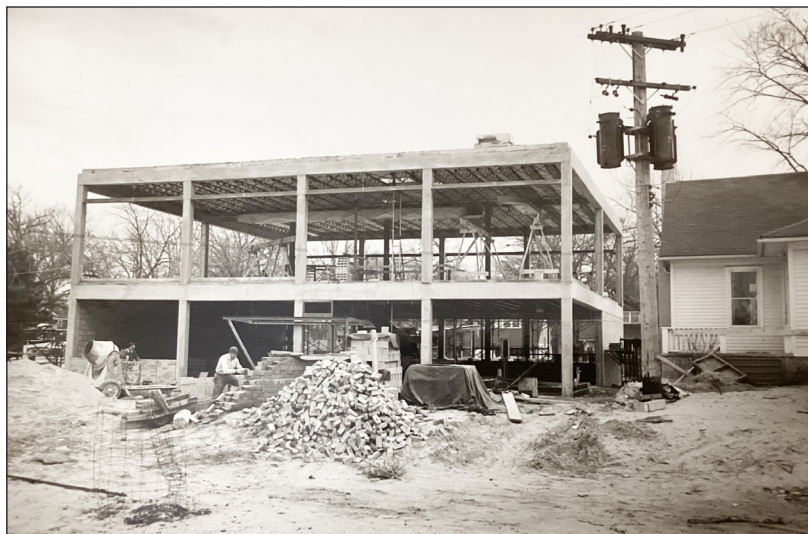
Reconstruction started right away. In addition to restoring the original atmosphere, a spacious dining area was added at the north end, more than doubling seating capacity. The renovated restaurant reopened in September 1985 and has been going strong ever since.

**LESS THAN THREE YEARS** later, on May 29, 1988, Jack Joliat passed away while vacationing in Ireland. Following his death, Dennis Brinker was named president, and Jay Joliat (Jack's son) became chairman. Although the ship had lost its captain, Dennis, who had been with the company since 1967, and Jay, who had been part of the business since his teenage years, proved capable leaders.

That leadership was put to the test as the chain entered the mid-1990s. The cafeteria concept had run its course, and the

# Collections Spotlight: South Oakland YMCA's Menettes Club

By Leslie S. Edwards



**Construction of the South Oakland YMCA building, 1016 West Eleven Mile Road, dedicated in 1958. This view is from Eleven Mile looking north.**



**Architect's concept drawing for the 1966 addition to the South Oakland YMCA.**

construction photographs, and newspaper clippings. In March 1963, the YMCA announced plans to expand the facility with a swimming pool, two new locker rooms and shower rooms, an exercise room, additional space for meetings and office use, a game room, and upgrades to the mechanical systems. A fundraising campaign was launched. By November 1965, Smith and Smith Associates of Royal Oak had drawn up the plans for the new addition. Local sources contributed \$182,000, and the Kresge Foundation, General Motors Corp., and other outside sources also contributed funding. The dedication ceremony was held on October 16, 1966.

The other three scrapbooks consist of materials related to YMCA women's clubs, including the YMCA Mother's Club (1962–1963) and the "Y's Menettes Club" (1950–1967). The Y's Menettes Club was established in 1950 as an auxiliary service club of the YMCA's Men's Club. The first meeting was held in November with 12 members present. Membership consisted primarily of the wives of men's club members, with associate memberships available to other women interested in YMCA services. Meetings were held monthly. The first five years of "history and saga of the Y's Menettes" are told in simple, hand-drawn illustrations.

**THE CLUB'S CONSTITUTION**, contained in the scrapbook, outlined its objectives — to promote the "spirit of friendship and mutual self-development in social literary and international outreach," cooperate with the Men's Club, encourage "justice in civic and international affairs" while abstaining from party politics, and actively participate in community service — youth work, philanthropy, and social movements. Programs included services for South Oakland's teenage girls, as well as initiatives to prevent juvenile delinquency.

One of the main goals of the Y's Menettes was to foster a sense of brotherhood among countries and to promote friendship rather than tension. International clubs included Bendigo (Australia), Aalborg (Denmark), and Kingston (Jamaica). In October 1962, the Royal Oak Y's Menettes had the opportunity to meet 28 young men and women from Japan who were here on a goodwill tour of the country. Newspaper clippings, newsletters, and photographs highlight these initiatives.

If you want to learn more about the Menettes or think one of your relatives may have been a member, the YMCA Scrapbook collection is open for research by appointment. Please get in touch with Joanna Schurrer, the museum's curator, at [curator@royaloakhistorical.com](mailto:curator@royaloakhistorical.com). Additionally, contact us if you have, or know of, any primary source materials that will help us tell the story of Royal Oak's robust history. 🍷

**ONE OF THE GOALS** of the Royal Oak Historical Society is to collect, preserve (in perpetuity), and make available primary source materials that document Royal Oak's history from its founding as a township to its incorporation as a city. The society is particularly interested in expanding our collection of manuscripts — the letters, diaries, and other personal papers of individuals and families — as well as the original records of organizations, churches, and businesses.

A primary source is a first-hand or contemporary account of an event or topic. Primary sources are the most direct evidence of a time or event because they were created by people who were there or had first-hand knowledge of the event. Secondary sources typically present primary sources with interpretation, analysis, and commentary, often incorporating hindsight or historical perspective. Common examples include criticisms, histories, and magazine, journal, or newspaper articles written after the

fact. Newspaper articles contemporaneous with the events described are traditionally considered primary sources.

**ONE OF OUR MOST RECENT DONATIONS** was a collection of scrapbooks documenting the South Oakland YMCA on Eleven Mile, near Woodward. The scrapbooks contain bylaws, newsletters, photographs, newspaper clippings, programs, event brochures, and even some correspondence.

One of the scrapbooks (1958–1967) covers the construction of the new YMCA building on 11 Mile Road and its 1966 addition. Included are programs from the 1958 dedication ceremony,



**Illustration from the 1950 Y's Menettes Club scrapbook.**



# 1926 HOME FEATURES UNIQUE FRONT ENTRY

*Editor's note: Last year, the Royal Oak Historical Society honored the record 548 houses built in Royal Oak in 1925, a milestone in home construction that wasn't matched on that scale until the 1950s. In 1926, an additional 312 houses were built in the city, among them is a house at 4406 Robinwood Ave. This excerpt is from the book, "Royal Oak Images, Yesterday's Charm Today's Treasures." The revised edition of the book will be on sale at the museum this spring, with proceeds benefiting the museum.*



**THIS UNIQUELY CRAFTED HOUSE** embodies more than one style. It was built of wood, with cedar siding painted in Federal blue. All the trim is white. Brackets extend from the body of the house to the wide overhanging eaves on the gabled ends. The unusual L shape permits an interesting front entry nestled in the angle of the house with an open portico. The gabled roof of the portico has a bargeboard hanging from it with a half-keyhole cutout.

The lower windows of the house are well balanced on either side of the entry and are double hung over six frames with shutters.

**THE HOUSE'S HISTORY** is not entirely clear, but the second-story bump-out and gable may have been added to provide additional living space. Neighbors say it once had a pond and a guest house. A portion of the property was sold and, at the same

time, part of the house was removed. Since it abuts a privacy fence, the original house may have had two wings, and now only one remains. The change was thought to have been done in the 1980s to make room for the neighbor's house and garage.

The windows on the second story have been crafted to resemble those on the first story, but there are four of them, which is appropriate to the height of the walls. It is a charming home well-suited to the neighborhood.

The 1945 Polk Directory shows George and Mildred A. Hund as owners of the home. In 2006, Carole Schwalbaum was listed as the current owner. 🏡

## CELEBRATE YOUR 100-YEAR-OLD HOME

The Royal Oak Historical Society is celebrating homes in the community that are 100 years old or more. The initiative began last year, marking the milestone of 548 houses built in 1925. In 1926, another 312 houses were built in the city.

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 will be available for order at no cost. To order, register by emailing your name and address to [curator@royaloakhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:curator@royaloakhistoricalsociety.org). Certificates can be picked up at the Royal Oak Historical Museum on March 22 during the opening of "Where They Lie: Stories that Royal Oak Cemeteries Tell."
- Homeowners are also able to purchase a forged metal plaque designating their home's centennial status with the Royal Oak Historical Society seal. The plaques are \$180 and are available at the museum and at Frentz Hardware; proceeds support the society's preservation efforts and the Historical Society's Museum.



Additionally, if your home is 100 years old or younger, homeowners who visit the museum can research their home and view any permits issued for improvements made since it was built. If you are interested in obtaining a record of your home, make an appointment by calling 248-439-1501.

## Join the St. Patrick's Day Parade

We are looking for volunteers to participate in Royal Oak's annual St. Patrick's Day Parade to represent the Historical Society. Participants must be members of the Royal Oak Historical Society and will promote the museum by wearing optional historical clothing and by carrying hand-held American flags. We will provide the banner for volunteers, as well as the flags. If interested, contact Al Carter at [ajc276@gmail.com](mailto:ajc276@gmail.com) or call (248) 885-1721. Volunteers will be asked to complete a waiver that will be emailed to you. Participants should plan to arrive at 10 a.m. March 14, at South Main and Lincoln. Historical clothing is encouraged but not required. Any questions can be addressed with Al Carter.



## Edward J. Wolfrum • Continued from Page 1

in 1963. (The high school closed in 1985.) As a curious kid, Ed poked his finger into a light socket and said he "got a jolt out of electrical things ever since." It didn't take long. He earned his amateur radio license at age 11. In the summer of 1959, at age 14, he passed the First-Class Commercial License, and with a pile of discarded radio equipment and a few dollars' worth of wires and tubes, he built a radio station in a corner of the family's basement.

**THE STATION**, which he dubbed WMEW, was named using the initials of his friend William Mortimore, who was "co-president" of the station, and Edward Wolfrum. This was no toy. The station broadcast a daily schedule of music, news, and a variety of programs on 650 kilocycles. Using power lines as a transmitting antenna, the station has a range of about a half mile. "On a good day, we can push out our signal nearly a mile," young Ed said in an article in *The Detroit News*.

With Mortimore and two other friends as announcers, and a list of advertisers, the station broadcast for about 25 hours a week. Unfortunately, after nearly a year on the air, the Federal Communications Commission pulled the plug on the operation, citing that the station lacked a license to operate, and warned Ed and his friends that they faced a \$10,000 fine and a year in jail if they did not comply.



**Ed Wolfrum began his professional career at age 17 in 1962, servicing, maintaining, and building studio equipment, starting at WEXL in Royal Oak, seen above.**

Fearless, Wolfrum persisted and at age 17, began his professional career in 1962, servicing, maintaining, and building studio equipment at one of the numerous Metro Detroit radio stations, starting at WEXL in Royal Oak on Eleven Mile, east of Main, and later working at WXYZ-AM, one of the top radio stations nationwide.

In 1963, while working at WXYZ and still going to high school, news broke about President John F. Kennedy being shot, and Ed was taken out of school to assist with the station's engineering to help cover the story.

**HIS CREATIVE GENIUS** played a crucial role in the subsequent success of the Detroit recording industry, leading him to international acclaim and professional recognition. Wolfrum worked at Motown, Golden World Records, United Sound Studios, Terra Shirma, Theme Productions, plus many other smaller studios throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

Although Wolfrum wasn't a household name like many of the musicians he collaborated with, it was his invention of a single piece of sound equipment that boosted his name and reputation in the local recording scene and later across the country and internationally.

In a 2012 interview with music writer Rob Moss, Wolfrum recalled, "I was 16, and I designed and built something I called a 'Direct Box' while I was working at WEXL in 1962. Basically, it allowed consumer-grade sound gear to interface with professional audio equipment, thereby considerably enhancing the quality of the finished product." The Direct Box was also referred to by many as the Wolfbox, but according to his wife, Susan, a long-time volunteer at the Royal Oak Historical Museum, he didn't like calling it that.

"I used it to interface the audio gear of local groups to the audio systems at halls for record hops, which made them sound much better," Ed said. "A lot of other groups heard the sound and wanted to use me to record them."

One of his recordings with a group called The Bishops reached the local record charts and considerably enhanced Wolfrum's reputation with studio

bosses. At one of the hops (dances), he met Devora and Frank Brown, who owned and operated Fortune Records. Frank bought a Direct Box from him for his studio and suggested he take it to United Sound Studios and some of the other big studios in town. "I knew United's work from the commercials they sent to the radio station," Wolfrum said in the interview. "The boss was audio pioneer Jimmy Siracuse. He bought three Direct Boxes from me."

**WOLFRUM'S TENURE AT WXYZ** ended abruptly in 1964 when ABC bought the station and summarily fired the entire talent and technical staff. He wasn't out of work for long because WOMC, another radio station, recruited him to help install an FM stereo transmitter. It was the first FM stereo radio station in Detroit. That's where he first met Mike McLean, Motown's chief sound engineer, when he came by to see the new FM stereo station. McLean invited him to come over to Motown to see what they were doing. Ron Malo, his predecessor at Motown, had bought a Direct Box from Wolfrum, so he knew what Wolfrum could do. "I knew many of their acts from the record hops, so I felt quite comfortable going in," Wolfrum said. "Once he'd shown me around, he made me an offer to work there, which I said I would think about it, but as I was leaving, Berry Gordy approached me and said, 'Mary Wilson (a founding member of the Supremes) told me about you. Why don't you come and work for us?' This sweetened the pot, so I accepted. I was 18." In March 1965, Wolfrum, at 19, became a Motown Records employee.

He joined a technical staff responsible for recording sessions, maintenance, disc cutting, building and developing new equipment, and various other engineering duties. "When I first went in, I did a lot of recording with people like Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, Martha and the Vandellas, Kim Weston, and the Supremes. Well, pretty well all their artists, really." Ed said. "It was all very exciting because the company was so hot, and many of the sessions we did became big hits. I got to



# McCartney Visits Royal Oak for 'American Hamburger'

By John S. Schultz

**BEYOND HIS LOVE OF MUSIC**, Ed Wolfrum enjoyed photography. He always carried a camera and would take as many shots as possible in the studios where he worked. Among the thousands of photographs amassed is a shot of Eddie Wingate, co-owner of Golden World Records. "Even though everyone knew him, he wouldn't have his photograph taken. I don't even think he knew I'd taken this one," Wolfrum said in an interview with Soul Source in 2012. "It was at Theme Productions during one of his Ric Tic sessions. It's funny, but Berry Gordy was similar over at Motown. He didn't let many people in to film or take photographs. I don't know what he was trying to hide."

Another shot of particular interest is a photograph of Paul McCartney of The Beatles sitting on a stool at Theme Productions, intently watching and listening to bassist Robert Andrew Kreinar, known as Bob Babbitt, of the studio band, the Funk Brothers. According to Ed's wife, Susan, Paul flew from England to Detroit in 1965 to check out the sound being engineered in the studios. She said Paul was unaware of Wolfrum's Direct Box but was curious about how Detroit recording studios were getting a "cleaner" sound from their recording artists.

"**PAUL WAS QUITE YOUNG THEN**, but he was fascinated by the bass playing here in Detroit and dropped by to watch and listen for himself," Ed said in an interview. "I think it was a spy mission, as I know he was trying to figure out how we got the bass sound."

Ed recalls that his Direct Box was right at Paul's feet, yet he never noticed it. After hearing the improved sound, Paul inquired how it was produced. Ed and others told McCartney they couldn't tell him.

Undaunted, Paul said, "OK," then said, "Since I am in America, I want to have an American hamburger," and suggested they all go out to McDonald's. Ed replied, "No," and suggested that if Paul wanted a great "American hamburger," they all go to Maverick's Drive-In in Royal Oak. Mavericks was a longtime, popular restaurant on Woodward, north of Thirteen Mile near Normandy. The group drove up Woodward Avenue, and Paul said he enjoyed the drive, telling his companions he appreciated seeing the city's sights along Woodward up to Royal Oak.

**AT MAVERICK'S**, the story goes, they were all enjoying their "American hamburger" when some young girls at a nearby table noticed Paul. Alerted by their attention, Paul suggested the group leave before things "got a bit out of control." As Paul got up from the table, one of the girls came up to him and said, "You look a lot like Paul McCartney!" Paul turned around and looked at the girl and said, "Yeah, I get that a lot." The group left without incident.

*Maverick's Drive-In in 1966.*



Photograph by Edward Wolfrum, courtesy of Susan Wolfrum

*A young Paul McCartney listens to bassist Bob Babbitt of the studio band, the Funk Brothers, play in a session at Theme Productions in Detroit in 1965.*



work with all the musicians, too. They were great. Probably the best group of guys I ever worked with, particularly the rhythm section. People like James Jamerson, Benny Benjamin, Uriel Jones, Earl Van Dyke, Eddie Willis, Joe Hunter, and all the Funk Brothers. You could give them a new tune, and they would pick it up so quickly."

Wolfrum eventually found working at Motown quite challenging. His responsibilities became divided between the recording and technical sides, and he had two bosses. McLean was his technical boss, and Lawrence Horn oversaw recording. He felt uneasy about it because he was being pulled in two directions ... and he was having trouble working with McLean.

**IN THE SUMMER OF 1965**, Wolfrum was approached by Bob d'Orleans, chief sound engineer at Golden World Records, to sell him a Direct Box. He bought two, but more importantly, he was introduced to Joanne Bratton, who introduced him to Ed Wingate. The two of them owned Golden World. They knew Wolfrum was from Motown and in the days of radio. Wingate asked him if I'd like to work with d'Orleans, and he jumped at the chance. "He took me under his wing and taught me a lot. As a recording engineer, he was way ahead of his time and was far superior to anyone at Motown. He was strict, though. I thoroughly enjoyed working with him, especially when it came to recording and remixing."

Ed Wolfrum's jump into the big league as a sound engineer at Golden World came in 1966, as he fondly recalls. "Columbia Records had booked time for some of their projects, people like Johnny Mathis, Tony Bennett, Kenny Rankin, and Andy Williams.

"I got a call from Joanne one day telling me that there was a very important session, but that Bob (d'Orleans) couldn't make it, and that I would have to do it on my own. It was Johnny Mathis or Kenny Rankin on the first day, I can't recall. I was nervous, but everything went OK, and after that I did a lot of sessions by myself. I still don't know if Bob had thrown me in at the deep end on purpose, to see how I would cope. He never told me."

*Continued on Page 10*



**Ed Wolfrum and Fred Bridges, a songwriter, producer, and member of the soul group the Brothers of Soul, upstairs in the control room at United Sound Systems in Detroit in 1967.**

Ironically, during that same year in 1966, Wingate finally sold the company to Motown. “Berry Gordy had been trying to buy Mr. Wingate out for a long time. I guess he wanted to get rid of the competition,” Wolfrum said. “He also didn’t like all the musicians from Motown coming over to record with us. I remember when the sale was going through, and Berry Gordy came by on a Saturday at Golden World, he saw me and said, ‘What are you doing here? Why don’t you come back to us now?’ I told him that I couldn’t get along with Mike McLean, to which he responded, ‘I’m still the boss. Let’s work something out.’ I did work at Motown again after that, right through until 1972, when they left for L.A., but as a consultant, not an employee.”

**BY THE END** of the summer of 1966, Wolfrum had been recruited to join a new company setting up operations down the street from Golden World, at Dexter and Davison. This time, it was as the chief technical engineer at Theme Productions Inc., a company specializing in jingles and commercials, among other services, for radio stations nationwide.

The owners of Theme didn’t understand music production, so Wolfrum agreed to bring recording sessions into the studio, for which he would receive bonuses in addition to his salary.

He brought in Andre Williams, Al Kent, Ed Wingate, Ollie McLaughlin, and many others for sessions. This brought in all the Funks, Motown’s session musicians, including Bob Babbitt, a renowned bassist. (See sidebar on Page 9). But once things started to take off, they balked at the bonuses Wolfrum was receiving. He showed up for a session one day, and they had cancelled it. They fired him on the spot and ordered him out of the building. The problem was that all his tools and test equipment were still in the studio, and they wouldn’t give him access, so he called the police. They thought they could do music themselves, but once the word got out, the sessions dried up. In six months or so, they were out of business. The building was burnt down in the 1967 riots.

In early spring 1967, a few days after his acrimonious split with Theme Productions, Wolfrum received a call from Jimmy Siracuse at United Sound Systems, who offered him a job as a sound engineer. “I was happy to take it. Everyone referred to United as the ‘mothership’ because it was so far ahead of every other studio and did so many varied types of work.

**UNITED SOUND STUDIOS** was best known for producing advertising jingles for radio and later television. They produced jingles for local commercials for shows such as Bill Kennedy, Soupy Sales, Milky the Clown, and The Rita Bell Show, which were recorded there. Battle Creek-based Kellogg Co. produced and recorded all its advertising jingles at United Sound for 10 years. Not only music production, but also motion picture mixing, magnetic film transfer, optical sound recording, commercials, industrial sound, jingles, IDs, disk recording, plus a lot of postproduction work.

United Sound had been in the same location, on Second Avenue at Antoinette, since its opening in 1933. Siracuse moved to Detroit from New York in the early 1930s to document the city’s vibrant jazz and blues scene.

Siracuse saw the potential market here and set up on his own. Back in the 1920s, RCA and Western Electric dominated corporate control of audio. Anyone recording professionally would have to pay a unit fee to them to use their systems, but Siracuse decided to build his own. By establishing United, he allowed independent record companies to flourish and put the city on the map. Later, he was instrumental in helping Wolfrum start his own business, Audio Graphic Services, which allowed him to work as a freelancer at United Sound. He also allowed him to continue doing sessions at Motown and, later, technical work at Terra Shirma.

For the next two and a half years, Wolfrum flourished at United Sound, finally becoming chief engineer in 1969. “I loved working there. The other engineers and I would be there at 7 a.m. most mornings, working on maintenance and preparation for recording. We’d work all day, and then I’d go to class at night too, working on my degree.”

**HE ATTENDED WAYNE STATE** and earned a degree in electrical engineering in 1969. Later, he pursued postgraduate work and earned a Ph.D. in electro-acoustics in 2002.

Ed’s explanation of working practices in Detroit helps explain the phenomenal amount of material produced there. “There was a tremendous work ethic in Detroit that was part of the culture here — that’s how we got so much done. We were technical perfectionists, and at United, all the engineers were allowed to express themselves in their own style. Everyone depended on each other. It was the same with musicians, whether they be the Funks or the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. That’s why companies from all over the country came to us.”

The rise of Detroit as a major music center in the early 1960s had as much to do with bringing together skilled musicians, technicians, performers, engineers, and associated artisans, all meeting at the same time, in the same place. Dr. Edward J. Wolfrum was an integral part of that success. He won seven Grammy Awards and two Emmy Awards for his engineering ingenuity. After suffering from a short illness, he died on November 1, 2021. 🍂



# Royal Oak Then & Now

BY JOHN MAURICE

## Then 1951



## Then 1960s



**NORTH MAIN ANIMAL HOSPITAL** has been a vital part of the community, serving Royal Oak for nearly 70 years. Located at 1611 North Main Street, just south of 12 Mile, the practice was originally called the Caswell Animal Hospital and Caswell Pet Clinic, run by Dr. Don Caswell starting in 1942.

The original building was constructed in 1929 and served as a waiting room for the Royal Oak streetcar line, which traveled up Main Street to Twelve Mile Road. Later, it became Bush Manufacturing Co. during World War II, before Dr. Caswell purchased it and converted it into an animal hospital.

In 1951, Dr. Don Francisco took over the practice

and renamed it North Main Animal Hospital. A longtime neighbor was Shorty's Auto Parts, which was probably a familiar sight (or maybe an eyesore) to longtime Royal Oak residents. Shorty's actually existed before the animal hospital.

**FROM THE EARLY DAYS** of the animal hospital, there was a small cottage on the property west of the main building that hospital personnel could use in a pinch. (See THEN photos). An addition to building in 1994 necessitated the removal of the cottage.

North Main Animal Hospital has a long history of its doctors staying with the practice for many years. The founder, Dr. Francisco, served from 1951 until his retirement in the early 1980s. His original partner, Dr. Gerald Ricketts, was with the hospital from 1964 to 1987. Dr. Bruce Baker joined the hospital in 1973 and remained actively involved for an impressive 50 years, retiring in 2023. Dr. Jim Mast, who was a partner of Dr. Baker, initially worked at North Main while still in high school. After college, Dr. Mast joined the staff full-time in 1987 and retired in 2020.

## Now



The hospital currently employs four veterinarians: Dr. April Simms, Dr. Jessica Fattal-Stebbins, Dr. Priscilla Koehler, and Dr. Precious Bagdonas-Bailey, who recently joined the practice.

The top THEN photo, taken in 1951, shows the hospital just before it became North Main. The sign for Shorty's Auto Parts is visible just past the white picket fence on the left. The small cottage that remained until 1994 is located to the right. The middle THEN photo is from the 1960s.

**THEN** photos provided by Dr. Bruce Baker.  
**NOW** photo by John Maurice.

# PRESIDENTS DAY MEMBERSHIP SALE AND 250TH CELEBRATION

**AS AMERICA APPROACHES** its 250th birthday, the Royal Oak Historical Society and Museum is on a mission to welcome 250 new members this year. To kick things off, we're celebrating Presidents Day with a special event from 2-4 p.m. on Sunday, February 15, at the museum. Meet George Washington, make a tricorne hat, and enjoy cherry treats. There will be prizes and more.

We are also introducing a membership sale that offers real value, real fun, and a way to help preserve our city's history.

Memberships start at just \$17.76 and come with meaningful perks and community impact.

## WHY JOIN?

When you become a member, you:

- Help fund our historical exhibits
- Support archival preservation
- Invest in education and community programming
- Play a direct role in preserving Royal Oak's history
- Become part of America's 250-year story

## MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGES – MEMBERS ENJOY:

- Our Quarterly Newsletter with stories of the people and events that shaped our city, as well as updates on exhibits, speakers, and special events to support the museum. Additionally, your name will be listed as a supporter in the newsletter.
- Invitations to special events, including members-only programs, previews, and celebrations.
- Support for exhibits and archives, ensuring our shared history stays alive — not boxed up in storage.
- FREE Admission to Bonus Member-Only Experiences.



## PRESIDENTS DAY SALE PRICING

- Individual Membership: **\$17.76 (40% off the regular \$30 price)**
- Family Membership: **\$20.26 (59.5% off the regular \$50 price)**

## JOIN TODAY!

Fill out the form on the back page of this newsletter, or go to our website, [royaloakhistoricalsociety.com](http://royaloakhistoricalsociety.com), pull down the Museum tab, and click Events.

### New Members as of January 25, 2026

LuAnn Adams  
James Ansel  
Barbara and Joel Blostein  
Jill Brown  
Angela Callaghan  
Irene and Henry V.T. Cotter  
Lani Devaney  
Richard Elton  
Sara Farhat  
Carolyn Gabler  
Patrick and Serene Gagniuk  
Leonardo Gianola  
Richard Gillam  
Luella Joyce  
Mike Joyce  
Ashley Karas  
Kathleen Klein  
Cindy and Doug La Ferle  
Gretchen Linenger  
Rev. Renee Machiniak  
Tedd McEachern  
Theresa McGuire  
Jim McMurdo  
Tom Meister  
Sandra Naughton  
Madeleine O'Connor  
Betty Ortnier  
Eileen Peet  
Norah Ryan  
Savka Family  
Elizabeth Simms  
Janice Tomakowsky  
Michelle Watson

### Recent Donors

Deb and James Anderson  
Nancy Broomfield-Aiken  
Bonnie Burnett  
Joan Cashman  
Colleen Christopher  
Helen Cost  
Jody Derosier  
Susan Donnellon  
Marcella and Tim Dwyer  
Carol Hanchett-Card  
Mary Hatala  
Thomas Hulbert  
Karen Jones  
Joan Larson  
James and Maureen Lawson  
John Markosky  
Sharon McMurray-Wurtz  
Kelly and Robert Muller  
Carole Packla  
Joan and Steve Redisch  
Daneen and Michael Roberts  
Martha and Ron Schultz  
Paul Shepard  
Mike and Family Shutes  
John Springer  
Brett Tillander  
Patt Trama  
Pat and Jack Wall  
Rick Wiegand

### Purchased Centennial Home Plaque

Virginia Abramson  
Carole Allen  
David Altesleben  
Ron Arnold  
Denita Barclay  
Barbara and Joel Blostein  
Jane Brancheau  
Jill Brown  
Lawrence Buck  
Maura Carpenter  
Patricia Donohue  
Siobhan Dotson  
Meredith Dunn  
Trixie and Scott Fasjanski  
Leonardo Gianola  
Carol Glaza  
Barbara and Allen Haglund  
Eve and Phillip Hyde  
Julie Hyde-Edwards  
Ashley Karas  
Tomas Kolar  
Anne Kopy  
Alli and Jason Leland  
Pamela Lemme  
Marci Mayer  
Cheryl McDonald  
Leon Murawski  
Inger and Mike Povlich  
Carol Pugh  
Chris Raske  
Robert Raymoure  
Amy Richardson  
Kaitlin Samacki  
Emily and John Sayig  
Steve Schumacher  
Mallory Schwartz  
Carole Sendek  
Jane Sledd  
Carrie Slomczemski  
Sue and John Srugis  
Diana Svinarich  
Trina Tocco  
Margaret Uppleger  
Claire Vial  
Beth Villeroit  
Mark Wigginton

*Thank You!*



# 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 — 1976

**DOBIE JEWELERS** in Royal Oak will begin its second century of business this year by opening a second store on March 1 in the new Lakeside Mall, M-59 and Hall Road in Sterling Heights. The 3,500-square-foot expansion store is smaller than the Royal Oak store at 502 South Washington, but owner James M. Dobie Jr. said he expects the two stores to generate combined sales of \$2 million in the first 12 months of operation. Dobie's opening will coincide with those of other stores in the new Lakeside Mall, which will have five major department stores: Sears, Montgomery Ward, J.C. Penney, Crowley's, and J.L. Hudson.

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**JAY REES OF ROYAL OAK** captured two firsts and a pair of seconds in the Michigan Junior Olympics Fencing Championships at the Brodhead Armory in Detroit. The 14-year-old Kimball High freshman won the epee and sabre titles in the under-15 Division. He was second in the under-16 men's foil and runner-up in the under-20 epee. He will represent Michigan in the U.S. Junior Olympics at the Troy Hilton in February. The U.S. team will compete in the junior world tournament in Poland in April.

### 60 years ago — 1966

**IN FEBRUARY, A PAIR OF DETROIT** contractors were joint low bidders on the extension of I-75 a half-mile south from where it now ends at Sprague in Royal Oak. Juttllon-Keily Company and Charles J. Rodgers together bid \$1.3 million to extend the freeway to Sixth Street, a block north of Lincoln. Five firms bid on the project, which includes a bridge, pumphouse, depressed freeway lanes, and replacement of extending Stephenson four-lane paving with a northbound service drive. Completion date slated for August 1967.

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**OAKLAND COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE** officials expect to add the state's first officially recognized college faculty union to the long list of "firsts" they've attained since opening the college in September. The 161-member college faculty has



The Daily Tribune, January 5, 1976

Who had one of these beauties? Look at the prices!

formed the Oakland College Faculty Association and is seeking sole bargaining rights under new state laws that require public employees to recognize bargaining agents.

### 70 years ago — 1956

**DETROIT'S CHIEF HIGHWAY PLANNER** has announced that to meet increased traffic needs, construction of one of three expressways into South Oakland will receive top priority. Alger F. Maio said that Northwestern will be converted to a superhighway, a Southfield expressway is being considered, and the Hastings-Oakland Freeway will enter South Oakland in Hazel Park.

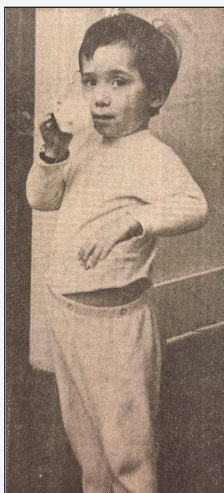
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**A 28,000 SQUARE-FOOT BUILDING** now under construction on the east side of Woodward, just south of Catalpa, Royal Oak, will

*Continued on Page 14*

### 60 Years Ago — February 10, 1966

#### Tonya Goes Shopping at 3 a.m.



Tonya has a watch from her grandma.

But the stem's broken off, the watch doesn't work, and when Tonya got up to go to the store early this morning, there was no way to tell the 2-and-a-half-year-old it was the middle of the night. Police found her in pajamas and her mother's show boots in front of the Hollywood Market, 714, North Main, at about 3:30 a.m. When her father, Don Swift, 606 North Center, collected his daughter about 7:30 a.m., Tonya was full of news. "Tonya going to store," she told him. "Tonya cried on the porch," she told her mother when she got home. Mrs. Swift said she and her husband went to a funeral home on Wednesday night and explained that they sometimes tell her they're going to the store when they go out. They left Tonya and a 1-year-old Curt with a babysitter. They returned about 10:30 p.m., and Mrs. Swift checked in on the children. Their mother woke up in the middle of the night, got a glass of water, and noticed the front door ajar. "I thought the wind blew it open. I closed it and locked it." Tonya, who's up at the "crack of dawn" with her father, wasn't there today. "I looked in at 7. She wasn't in bed," said her mother. "We looked in the basement, in the closets, and called outside. When my husband came back from looking around the block, he said I'd better call the police. I already had. "They must have fed

her." Mrs. Swift said. "She wouldn't eat her breakfast. It's never happened before. It will never happen again." Tonya, who'd already told Grandma about it on the phone, couldn't care less. She sat down on the couch, pulled up a foot, and inspected her toes carefully. That's a 2 and a half year old for you.

## Looking Back • Continued from Page 13

become the new Royal Oak store of the Triangle Furniture Company. The one-story building was described by Triangle's president as "suburban modern" style.

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**THE ROYAL OAK SYMPHONY**, for the first time, has the solid backing of an organized group of South Oakland music-lovers. Called the South Oakland Symphony Society, the group will undertake projects to support and publicize the symphony. Previously, the Royal Oak Symphony had difficulty obtaining a firm financial base.

### 80 years ago — 1946

**JUDGE WILLIAM J. BEER WAS APPOINTED** by Mayor William Hayward as head of a committee to study the possibility of raising the status of Royal Oak's justice court to that of a municipal court. Committee members will include Commissioner Ellery A. Laidlaw, City Attorney W. C. Hudson and E. Clyde Hobart.

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**"THE DEMANDS ON OUR OFFICE** continue to increase while the number of job openings continues to remain low," Sam A. Freshney, director of the United States Employment Office at Royal Oak, said. Freshney revealed that more than 5,000 active applications from South Oakland County workers are on file in the office at 218 Washington Drive. Of these, 3,397 are from veterans. During the week ending Feb. 23, 4,428 SOC workers appeared at the office, including 2,486 veterans. Approximately 500 veterans have been placed in jobs since V-J Day. During the week ending Feb. 23, 3,146 unemployed SOC workers received unemployment compensation. Eugene T. Dorner, executive director of the Michigan Unemployment Compensation Commission, has announced. A total of \$2,208,879.17 was paid to 117,423 unemployed individuals throughout Michigan during the annual period. This does not include readjustment allowances filed by unemployed veterans under the G.I. Bill of Rights.

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**A NEW FIRST AID COURSE** under sponsorship of the South Oakland Girl Scout Leaders association will begin at 8 p.m., March 12, in the Girl Scout office, 206 West First Street. Gordon MacLachlan will teach the course, which will include new techniques learned during the war. Reservations for the class may be made by calling the Red Cross office, LI 2-1850.

#### Arthur L. Snow Buys Tom Alger Building



### 80 Years Ago — 1946

#### Landmark Building Sold in Royal Oak

One of the business section landmarks in Royal Oak has changed ownership. It is the Thomas R. Alger estate, located at 609-611 South Washington Avenue. Arthur L. Snow, a real estate broker, purchased the property from Martin E. Alger, an heir to his father's estate.

The building, approximately 50 x 110 feet and erected in 1913, is among the oldest business structures in South Oakland. It is distinctive for its second-floor bay window. Adjoining it on the south is the old D. K. Smith furniture building, and on the north, the Dr. J. S. Morrison estate property on which the L. A. Dantzer auto service station is located.

Snow plans to modernize the Alger building to promote the trend of Royal Oak business moving south along Washington Avenue. Part of the building, previously occupied by the First General Baptist Church, will be used for large, modern real estate offices by Mr. Snow, and the balance will be leased for retail purposes. Snow plans to move his offices to the Alger building around May 1, directly across the street from his current office.

Occupants of the Alger building include the Frank Morelli shoe repair shop on the ground floor, and families in the second-floor apartment. Tom Alger was the City of Royal Oak photographer for many years. Before he moved to Mackinaw City in 1921, his studio and residence apartment were on the second floor of his building.

### 90 years ago — 1936

**"NOT A PUPIL OF ROYAL OAK SCHOOLS** has suffered smallpox in the past five years, and the diphtheria rate has been materially decreased," Dr. Charles H. Benning, director of the Royal Oak township health district and medical adviser of Royal Oak schools, said while discussing the health report of his office submitted to the board of education for consideration tonight. The report covers work done from the opening of schools in September to Jan. 10. Pointing out that he gave toxoid to 226 children and vaccinated 187, Dr. Benning said, "Mothers should be urged to take their preschool children to their family physicians in order to get protection against smallpox and diphtheria as soon as possible." There were 173 cases of chicken pox, one of pneumonia, 76 of impetigo, 33 cases of scabies, 18 of mumps, 78 of ringworm, 31 of sore throat, three of boils, 29 of whooping cough, and 31 of scarlet fever included in the list of communicable diseases.

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**VIRGO E. KINSEY, MANAGER** for five years of funeral homes in Grand Rapids and Royal Oak, opened his own funeral parlor at the northwest corner of South Lafayette and West Fifth Street. Kinsey had been the manager of a Grand Rapids parlor for two years before coming to Royal Oak in 1933 to manage the Sparks Funeral Home at 500 South Washington Avenue. Previously, Kinsey was a trumpet player in orchestras that toured the nation. On one occasion, he played an engagement in Shanghai, China. Assisting Kinsey will be Robert H.



Virgo E. Kinsey Funeral Home, 1937



Spitler, a recent graduate of the Worsham School of Embalming in Chicago, the same school as Kinsey, and who was also employed at Sparks. Mrs. Kinsey will also assist her husband as lady attendant and cosmetician, a capacity in which she has served for several years.

### 100 years ago — 1926

**ROYAL OAK HIGH SCHOOL** will open its second semester on Monday, with an enrollment of approximately 1,100 students, of whom 116 were recently promoted from eighth grade. One result of the several changes made in the high school plans by this enlarged enrollment will be the elimination of study periods at the school. The pupils will attend only classes and laboratory work and will do their studying at home. The plans were described by Supt. Frank Hendry. Additionally, he announced a change in the start time from 8 o'clock to 8:30 as a necessary measure due to excessive tardiness in the 8 o'clock classes. In order to save more time, the roll call period is being cut to 10 minutes.

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**BREWERS, DISTILLERS, AND BEVERAGE MANUFACTURERS** were asked by the U.S. Treasury Assistant Secretary Lincoln Andrews to draft a code of ethics that would put them on their honor not to violate the prohibition law. The prohibition czar wrote a letter to regional dry administrators, asking them to call conferences with the brewers and alcohol handlers in their districts to talk over the "honor system." The government desires to aid all legitimate businesses, and Andrews has asked all intoxicant producers to cooperate with him to enforce the law. Under the plan, should one dealer learn of another violating the law, he would report the occurrence to prohibition headquarters for action. The violator's permit would then be revoked.

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**ROYAL OAK NOW HAS AN AMBULANCE**, a big new one having been put in service by J. H. Spiller, undertaker. It is a big limousine type and looks much more like a large pleasure car than an ambulance. The chassis is a Packard, and the body is a special design built by the A. J. Miller Company of Bellefontaine, Ohio. The driver's seat is shut off from the main part of the ambulance, but sliding glass panels between the two compartments may be drawn aside. The main portion is large and handsomely furnished in blue upholstery. The main compartment is large enough to contain a certain special hospital cot, which may be wheeled directly in and out of the ambulance through either of the side doors or the rear door. Two seats are provided for nurses or attendants. In addition to having the ambulance available at all times for private calls, Spiller has made an agreement with the City of Royal Oak for use of the ambulance for emergency calls day and night. 🚑

### WARNING TO MOTORISTS OF OAKLAND COUNTY IN 1922

*Editor's note: The following is a traffic ordinance printed in The Daily Tribune from 1922.*

An ordinance to regulate and control the traffic and travel on and use of certain public highways of the County of Oakland, The County of Oakland ordains:

Section 1. It shall be unlawful for any person to halt his or her automobile or other vehicle upon the travelled portion of any highway for the purpose of purchasing or obtaining gasoline, oil, or any article or merchandise of any character, from any tank, reservoir, stand, booth or other place or sale which may be located along the border of said highway.

Section 2. Any person operating or managing an automobile upon any of the highways in said County of Oakland, who shall, for any purpose, desire to stop such automobile, shall withdraw or cause such automobile to be withdrawn to either side of the travelled portion of such highway before stopping the same.

Section 3. It is hereby declared unlawful for any person without the consent of the owner or occupant of the abutting land to pick or destroy or remove in any way fruit, nut, or other produce found within the limits of any highway in the said County of Oakland.

Section 4. It shall be unlawful for any person or persons to travel upon any part of any of the public highways of the County of Oakland, either on foot or by means of a vehicle, in bathing suits unless each person so attired shall wear a sufficient garment or cloak to entirely envelop such person.

Section 5. The provisions of this Ordinance shall not apply to any public highway within the limits of any incorporated village or city in this county.

Section 6. Any person violating any of the provisions of this Ordinance shall, upon conviction thereof, be punished by a fine not exceeding one hundred dollars. (\$100) or imprisonment in the county jail or a period not, exceeding ninety (90) days or both such fine and imprisonment in the discretion of the court imposing the punishment.

Made and passed by the Board of County Supervisors for the County of Oakland.

FRANK J. MALCOLM, Chairman

W.H. CRYDERMAN, Clerk, Lansing, Michigan

*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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