



ROYAL OAK Historical Society

OCTOBER 2024 • ROYALOAKHISTORICALSOCIETY.COM

Cheers to Royal Oak's First and Only Winery

By Leslie S. Edwards

ROYAL OAK WAS once home to a winery and wine manufacturing business. Founded by Irish immigrant William Lett Rutledge in 1934, Chateau Wines Corp. was located on Woodward Avenue between Warwick and Parker, where Arby's is today.

Rutledge (1886–1984) was born Clifden, County Galway, Ireland, near the western coast. He emigrated from Ireland on the S.S. Adriatic in November 1907 and eventually settled in Detroit, becoming a mechanical engineer. In 1919, Rutledge established the ROTO Pump Manufacturing Co. So how did this successful Irish immigrant go from manufacturing pumps to opening a local winery?

THE WINERY BUSINESS in southeast Michigan was a product of Prohibition. Alcohol was banned statewide on May 1, 1918, two years before the national ban. In Detroit, the ban triggered bootlegging, which became a prosperous industry due to the close proximity of Canada, where alcohol was legal. Two wineries were opened in Windsor, Ontario — one by Mariano Meconi and the other by Maurice (Morris) Twomey. After Prohibition was repealed in April 1933, these two men, along with Detroit real estate developer John Corsi, were instrumental in the establishment of the wine industry in Michigan. The state proved to be ideal for wine production with ample sugar production, vineyards that had formerly been used by Welch's for producing grape juice, and an alcohol industry that had never ceased in Detroit.

Meconi relocated to Detroit while Twomey renovated a former DUR (Detroit United Railway) electrical powerhouse in Farmington into a massive wine production facility and established LaSalle Wines and Champagne Co. the same month Prohibition was repealed. The early wineries modeled their wines after California, making sweet wines high in alcohol and

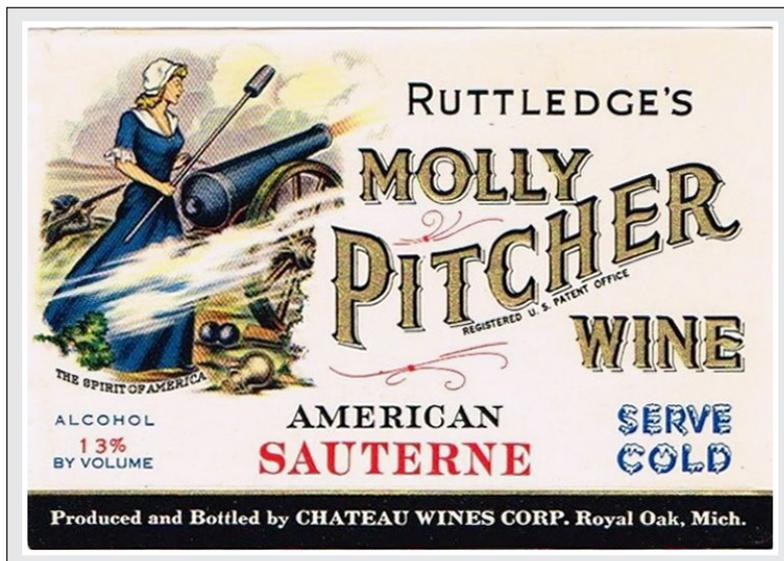


Photo courtesy of eBay

A 1940s label from the Revolutionary War-themed "Molly Pitcher" brand

Continued on Page 12

**HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ANNUAL DINNER**

6 p.m. • Tuesday, October 15
Royal Oak First United
Methodist Church
Tickets \$40 on ROHS website

Oakland Elementary: A Century of Growth and Innovation

By Judy Davids

OAKLAND ELEMENTARY School celebrated its 100th anniversary in September with a special event featuring food, school tours, performances, exhibits, alumni meetups, and proclamations. The historic school has been a cornerstone of our community since 1924. From its humble beginnings on former farmland to its current role as a modern educational facility, Oakland's rich history reflects a century of growth.

Oakland Elementary first opened its doors on April 19, 1924, on 4 ½ acres of former cornfield land purchased from John Brinkley for \$20,000. At the time, the school was part of the Madison



Continued on Page 8

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD EXHIBIT COMING JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2025 ■ SEE PAGE 3 FOR DETAILS

ROYAL OAK
Historical Society

President: Tom Toggweiler

Vice President: Jay Dunstan

2nd Vice President: Deb Anderson

Secretary: Kelly Muller

Treasurer: Mike Frentz

Directors:

Pat Burean, Carol Card, Al Carter,
Judy Davids, Aaron Dorn, Patty
Dunstan, Marcy Dwyer, Jim Ellison,
Phil Lewan, Mike Matthews-
Pennanen, Bob Muller, John S.
Schultz, Sherry Toggweiler

Museum Curator

Johanna Schurrer

Curator Emeritus

Muriel Versagi

Newsletter Staff

Editor: John S. Schultz

Designer: Ellen Kehoe

Contributors: Don Callihan, Judy
Davids, Don Drife, Leslie S. Edwards,
John Maurice

ROYAL OAK
Historical Museum

1411 West Webster Road
Royal Oak, MI 48073

royaloakhistoricalsociety.com

(248) 439-1501

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

UPCOMING EXHIBITS

October 8–15

Plein Air Painting Showcase
South Oakland Art Association

November 2–16

South Oakland Art Association
Show and Sale

January – February 2025

Underground Railroad in
Oakland County Project exhibit

President's Message

BY TOM TOGGWEILER

Membership Matters

OUR 83RD ANNUAL Royal Oak Historical Society Dinner is rapidly approaching and will be held on **Tuesday, October 15**, at the First United Methodist Church. This traditional and essential fundraising event is a time we bring our members and volunteers together to celebrate the long and rich history of our city.

The evening is always enjoyable and a chance to catch up with friends and exchange stories and memories of growing up or living in this great city. Dinner will be provided by Famous Dave's BBQ. Social hour begins at 6 p.m. followed by dinner, awards, and trivia.

Membership and volunteers are the backbone of our organization, and we encourage you to attend and urge your friends and neighbors to join the society. If you are a past member, this is a great time to renew your membership and help support and grow our mission of preserving our city's heritage. Memberships may be renewed and new members can sign up at the dinner or by filling out the application form on the back of this newsletter. Dinner tickets are \$40 and are available at the door or may be purchased ahead of time at royaloakhistoricalsociety.com. We hope to see you there.

The dinner is one of three major fundraising events held to support the operations of the historical society and keep the doors open to our beloved museum. The other two events are the annual Memorial Day Pancake Breakfast held at the Farmers Market and the annual car show at the museum. This year we flipped and served nearly 2,000 pancakes and an endless supply of sausages to more than 600 guests.

IN AUGUST, WE HELD OUR 12th annual Muscle & More at the Museum car show, attracting more than 125 vintage automobiles, with many of them restored by their owners. Hundreds of visitors joined in the fun on a beautiful summer afternoon at the museum. We thank the many sponsors who helped make this a successful fundraising event.

A special thanks goes to Lincoln of Troy, our title sponsor, and to Champion-Hargreaves Chevrolet. At the end of the event, the Royal Oak police escorted several vehicles in a parade through downtown. The First Congregational Church graciously donated the use of their parking lot for the day.

SEPTEMBER ARRIVED with a fundraising event to honor Jean Chamberlain, a past executive director of the Royal Oak Chamber of Commerce and a long-time supporter of organizations in Royal Oak and Oakland County, for all her efforts over the years. We also hosted a Granny's Attic Sale and thank all for their efforts and items for our sale. In addition, we held our second euchre tournament this year with nearly 50 players for a night of fun and camaraderie to raise funds for the museum. We will be announcing further euchre nights on our website and through this newsletter.

In December, Santa will be visiting us again. Stay tuned for that date as he clears his busy schedule to pay the kids a visit here at the museum.

Looking forward to your continued support. 🍷

SAVE THE DATES — SPEAKER SERIES

For details and to purchase tickets go to: royaloakhistoricalsociety.com

7 p.m. at the museum • \$15 per person • Space limited to 50

Friday, Nov. 8 and Friday, Dec. 13 — To be announced

Friday, Jan. 10, 2025 — Leslie Pielack, director of the Birmingham Museum, with an overview of the Underground Railroad in Oakland County Project (sellout expected)

Friday, Feb. 14, 2025 — Freedom Seekers in Royal Oak (sellout expected)

Curator's Corner

BY JOHANNA SCHURRER

Traveling Underground Railroad Exhibit Comes to Museum

WE ARE HONORED to host the traveling exhibit of the Underground Railroad in Oakland County Project in January and February 2025 at the museum. The multi-faceted project was the idea of the Birmingham Museum and has been researched by volunteer-based teams in Birmingham, Farmington, Pontiac, Southfield, and Royal Oak, including our own historian Don Drife, to tell the story of the Underground Railroad during the 1800s in our city and the Oakland County area. It was funded by a grant from the Michigan Council for the Humanities, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.



Photographs by Johanna Schurrer

The complete exhibit on display at the Southfield Public Library

As just one part of the project, the exhibit panels frame the story of the abolitionists and freedom seekers of that time. We are collaborating with the multi-community group to update these boards with new information gleaned through additional and time-consuming research. One panel (shown at right) tells the story of Royal Oak Township's freedom seekers and adds to the larger historical context of that movement.

Beyond our members and the public, we are hoping to attract fourth and fifth graders from all

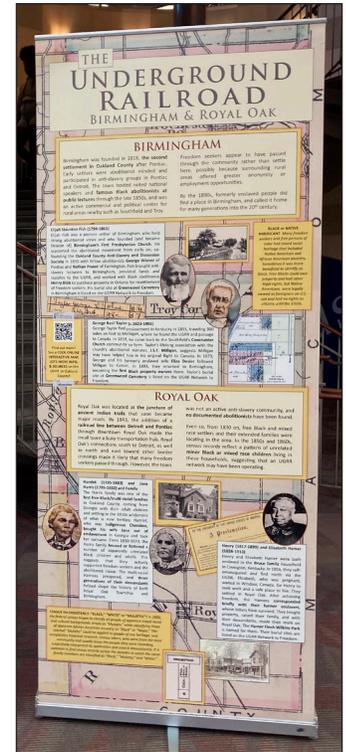
Royal Oak elementary schools to visit the traveling exhibit and accompanying displays. This wonderful pictorial history will also include speakers to tell the story of these freedom seekers.

Stay tuned for specific times and dates to be announced on our website and to members.

THE RAILROAD THROUGH ROYAL OAK exhibit was very successful, with more than 200 visitors attending the opening, a speaker program, or viewing the displays. Train enthusiasts loaned their own artifacts and were on hand to answer questions. Following that exhibit was the annual display of concept art by retired automotive designers from the 1960s and '70s who, without the use of computers, drew by hand and sculpted models of the cars of the future. For the first time we also exhibited student work from the College for Creative Studies in Detroit.

The automotive exhibit and car show began in 2012 as an idea of Randy Burean, one of our volunteers and a car enthusiast. Randy and other volunteers created an exhibit in the museum laid out to match Woodward Avenue — from Square Lake down to 10 Mile — displaying all the drive-ins that we teenagers cruised in and out of before being asked to leave because we weren't going to eat anything. Our car show is going strong because of Randy's vision, and I thank him.

We are still building research resources for our library. If you are interested in family histories, stores and businesses, or homes in our city, or maybe just the history of Royal Oak, we have volunteers who can help you. 🌟



This panel includes Royal Oak freedom seekers history, including the Hamer family.

From Our Collections

Craftswoman and Painter Georgia (Judd) Carpenter



(Left) Original etching, 1934, from the Earla B. Smith Papers. Smith (1918–2009) was born in Royal Oak, graduated from Royal Oak High School in 1937, and became a teacher at Troy High School. This etching, along with several other greeting cards, was created by Georgia (Judd) Carpenter, a close friend of the Smiths. Georgia was a craftswoman and taught painting classes through the Royal Oak Adult Education program.

(Right) The photograph shows Georgia with her husband Frank, ca 1905. The Smith Papers include photographs, correspondence, scrapbooks, and writings pertaining to the Smith, Judd, and Carpenter families.

— Leslie S. Edwards



Monument Honors Hamer Family of Royal Oak

By Don Drife

NEARLY 300 PEOPLE, including about 200 students from Northwood Elementary School, city and county officials, and other notables gathered on September 23 to unveil a monument to honor Elizabeth Hamer, who fled slavery from Covington, Kentucky, in 1856 and found freedom in Royal Oak by way of Canada with the help of the Underground Railroad.

The ceremony included remarks by Royal Oak mayor Michael Fournier; Rochelle E. Danquah, chairperson for the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission; and Lakeesha Morrison, the great-great-great-granddaughter of Elizabeth Hamer and her husband Henry.



Mrs. Elizabeth Hamer

The speakers highlighted the courage of the Hamers to escape from Kentucky, and artist Austen Brantley spoke of his journey of discovery as he created the bust of Elizabeth. He desired to show her as a regal person and not just as a freedom seeker. The Northwood students did the countdown leading to the unveiling.

THE HAMERS CAME to Royal Oak around 1860 and about five years later purchased a five-acre, triangular piece of land just north of Hamer Finch Wilkins Park, the site of the sculpture and the ceremony. The tip of the triangle is at the intersection of Crooks and Webster roads. The Hamers raised six children. They are buried in the Royal Oak Cemetery. Their gravesite is listed on the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

No photo of Henry Hamer is known, so only Elizabeth is sculpted. 🗿



Northwood Elementary students enthusiastically count down before the sculpture is unveiled.



Family member Lakeesha Morrison (left) and artist Austen Brantley stand at the monument.



Descendants of Henry and Elizabeth Hamer gather after the ceremony.

Dr. Ruth Wagner, the Pioneer Behind Royal Oak's First Hospital

By Don Callihan

IN THE SUMMER OF 1924, a new doctor came to the Oak Ridge area of then-Royal Oak Township to begin practicing medicine. She hand-painted her business sign, an easy task as she had a natural talent for art, and hung it beside the stairs that led to her office above Gesley's Drug Store on the northwest corner of Rochester Road and 13 Mile Road. Her name was Ruth Evangeline Wagner, and she was Royal Oak's first woman doctor.

Ruth was born in Chester County, Pennsylvania, on Nov. 1, 1892. Her father was a minister in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ and, sometime after her birth, served a tiny mountain church in Franklin County, Pennsylvania. In mid-1900, he gave up the ministry and moved with his family to Oberlin, Ohio, where he became a letter carrier. This move proved beneficial for Ruth as the town was the home of Oberlin College, which set the academic standard for the community.

Ruth graduated from Oberlin's Union School in 1912 and was drawn to Michigan Agricultural College, now Michigan State University, by the Domestic Economy Program for Women. She enrolled in the program and graduated in May 1916 with a bachelor's of science degree in home economics.

HER INTEREST IN NUTRITION led to her enrollment at the Detroit College of Medicine (today Wayne State University College of Medicine). The college recognized her artistic talents and sent her to Johns Hopkins University for a crash course in medical illustration under Max Broedel, a world-renowned medical illustrator. With her talent recognized, she used her medical illustration and photography abilities to pay her tuition and expenses. She received her medical degree in 1922 but stayed on for an additional year to teach pathology before moving to St. Luke's Hospital in Cleveland in 1923 to begin serving her internship.

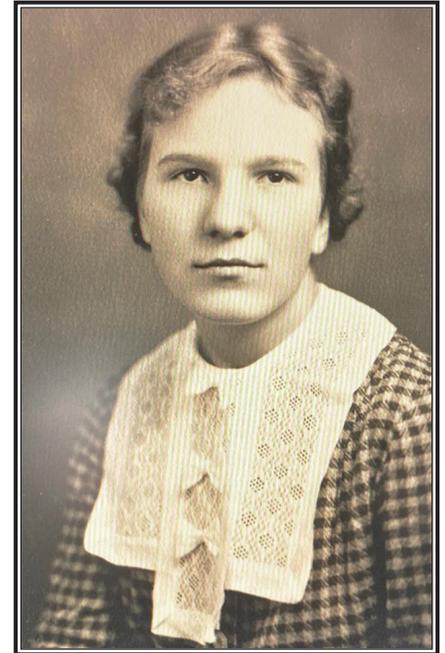
When her internship ended, she returned to an apartment in Detroit but quickly realized she was tired of apartment life and moved to a house at 324 E. LaSalle St. in Royal Oak, just west of Rochester Road. Shortly after that, she rented the space above Gesley's Drug Store at Rochester Road and 13 Mile for her office.

In those days, men would not consider going to a woman doctor, but women, particularly expectant mothers, liked the idea, and Dr. Wagner made her mark on the community by delivering babies. On more than one occasion, she delivered a new baby at night with a nervous father holding a coal oil lamp at her side as not everyone had electricity.

She also treated many children. Early in her career, a seriously ill little girl was brought to her. She quickly realized the girl had diphtheria and took her to Herman Kiefer Hospital in Detroit, which specialized in the treatment of contagious diseases.

The girl died a short time after arrival. Realizing that an epidemic could be in the making, the State Health Department in Lansing was contacted, and several hundred doses of diphtheria antitoxin were delivered to the area by a Michigan State Police motorcycle officer. The next morning, Dr. Wagner and two other physicians set up a clinic at Oak Ridge School and gave antitoxin injections to all who showed up. No additional diphtheria cases were reported.

Continued on Page 6



Ruth E. Wagner in the 1920s

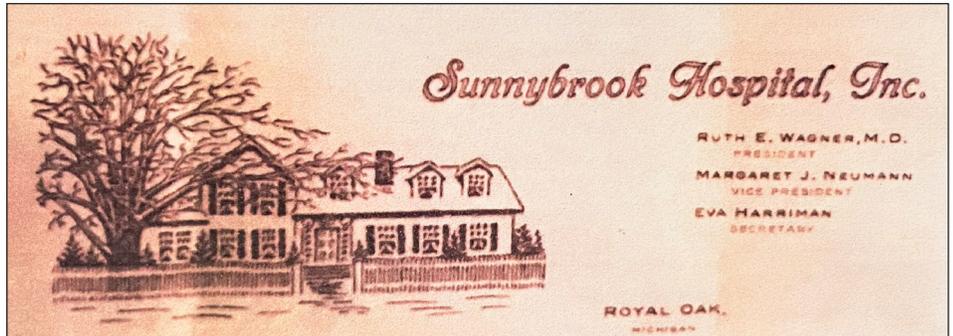


In 1929, Dr. Wagner bought the 100-year-old David Williams farmhouse at 3915 Rochester Road north of 13 Mile and remodeled it into the 20-bed Sunnybrook Hospital.

Dr. Ruth Wagner • Continued from Page 5

As she continued to practice, it became abundantly clear to her that Royal Oak needed a hospital. Those requiring hospitalization had to go to Pontiac or Detroit, where overcrowding was a serious problem. Never one to shy away from a challenge, Dr. Wagner decided to open her own hospital, so in 1929, she bought a 100-year-old farmhouse, originally built by David Williams, one of the area's early settlers. It was located at 3915 Rochester Road — on the west side of Rochester Road between Sunnybrook Drive and Edmund Avenue. She remodeled the house and turned it into Sunnybrook Hospital, which had 20 beds and seven cribs.

SUNNYBROOK WAS FOUNDED to carry out Dr. Wagner's belief that hospitalization should be as pleasant and home-like as possible. She wanted her hospital rooms to seem more like rooms at home rather than rooms in an institution. Each room was painted a different color and had different décor. The building was demolished more than 60 years ago, and while few details survive, a real estate advertisement reported it had 15 rooms.



Sunnybrook Hospital letterhead

When the hospital opened in 1930 — the exact date is unknown — Dr. Wagner moved her office and residence from her home on East LaSalle to the hospital. Then, in 1933, wanting to be closer to downtown, she established a new office at 109 W. 11 Mile (just west of Main Street on the south side of 11 Mile, the rear of present-day Pearl's Deep Dive Restaurant). She held office hours in both locations. In 1937, she purchased and remodeled a house on the southwest corner of 11 Mile and Center Street, transforming it into a patient-room office suite. The home was later torn down to create the parking lot for mail trucks behind the post office.

By July 1940, Sunnybrook Hospital was operating in the red, and Dr. Wagner decided to close it. The City of Royal Oak was approached to take it over but because of its location two miles north of downtown and a lack of funding to convert it into a municipal hospital, the deal was not made. While it was no longer a hospital, it remained Dr. Wagner's residence.

A SECOND HOSPITAL, Royal Oak Private Hospital, had been operating in Royal Oak's Washington Square Building since July 1, 1930. The exact date that Sunnybrook Hospital began treating patients is not documented. However, the 1930 United States census taken in April shows Dr. Wagner and another doctor, Marion Stephenson, at the Sunnybrook Hospital address. As more than one doctor would be needed to staff a hospital, this suggests that Sunnybrook Hospital was open before Royal Oak Private Hospital.



Dr. Wagner's 1949 City Commission portrait

Although the city declined to take over Sunnybrook Hospital, the city commission decided on Oct. 14, 1942, to enter into a contract with Dr. Albert P. Ohlmacher, the founder of Royal Oak Private Hospital in the Washington Square Building, for \$8,800. Dr. Ohlmacher was about to leave his practice to report for active duty as an Army surgeon at O'Reilly General Hospital in Springfield, Missouri. The hospital then closed for alterations and reopened in December 1942 as Royal Oak General Hospital.

One of the city commission's first actions upon establishing the hospital was to appoint a Medical Advisory Committee to provide advice on rules regarding standards and qualifications. The committee was to advise the hospital's superintendent, the city manager, and the commission's hospital committee. Dr. Wagner was appointed to that committee.

BESIDES HER MEDICAL ENDEAVORS, Dr. Wagner was active in the community. She was a charter member of the Royal Oak Soroptimist Club, the Venture Club, and the Royal Oak YMCA, and a member of the Royal Oak Chamber of Commerce and the Royal Oak Business and Professional Women's Club. In 1947, she was elected president of the Royal Oak Soroptimist Club, and in 1948 she was elected to the directorate of the Chamber of Commerce and the YMCA. She hosted meetings for many of these groups in her home until 1937 when she remodeled the basement of her 11 Mile and Center Street office to create clubrooms where these and other organizations could hold their meetings. These clubrooms were so well known that announcements for upcoming meetings specified simply that the events would be "in the clubrooms."

As she witnessed Royal Oak's rapid growth in the post-war years, Dr. Wagner was concerned about overburdening water, sewage, and sanitation services. She also wanted to ensure developers left adequate land for parks and recreation. In 1949, she ran for the Royal Oak City Commission with these issues as her platform and became the first woman in 20 years to be elected commissioner. She was named to the Royal Oak Parks and Recreation Board early the following year.

Royal Oak Hospital History – Timeline

1924

A conference of Royal Oak physician surgeons gathered on June 20 at the Chamber of Commerce in Royal Oak to discuss the need for a hospital to serve the area. They wanted this hospital to be a model institution with equipment which would bring all the cases developing within the territory and not have the more important ones all go to Detroit. A committee of physicians and citizens was to be appointed at once to conduct an immediate investigation into the subject.

1930 — Sunnybrook Hospital

In 1929, Dr. Ruth Wagner bought a 100-year-old farmhouse, originally built by David Williams, one of the area's early settlers on the west side of Rochester Road, between Sunnybrook Drive and Edmund Avenue. She remodeled the house and turned it into Sunnybrook Hospital, which had 20 beds and seven cribs and opened in 1930. Because of financial difficulty, the hospital closed in July 1940.

1930 — Royal Oak Private Hospital

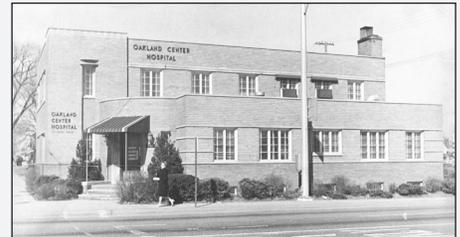
The Washington Square Building, designed by architect Frederick D. Madison and built in 1927 and located at Washington and Fourth, was Royal Oak's first "skyscraper" at six stories. Royal Oak Private Hospital, founded by Dr. Albert P. Ohlmacher, was on the fourth floor and opened July 1. The hospital had 21 beds with two or three beds reserved for emergencies.

1940 — Oakland Center Hospital

Dr. Bernard F. Gariepy built Oakland Center Hospital at 120 W. 11 Mile on the northeast corner of Center Street. It closed sometime before 1972, when it became a drug treatment clinic for a short time and later closed for good.

1940s

In the 1940s, two area groups — the South Oakland Hospital Authority and a similar group in Birmingham/Bloomfield — formed committees to advocate for a hospital to support Detroit's growing northern suburbs. The two groups eventually merged into one incorporated as Oakland Hospital and considered two locations: a site on Adams Road in Birmingham and one at Thirteen Mile and Woodward in Royal Oak. The 112-acre Royal Oak site was ultimately chosen. During construction, a load of bricks was mistakenly delivered to Oakwood Hospital in Dearborn. As a result, the name of the new hospital was changed to William Beaumont Hospital, in honor of Fort Mackinac army surgeon, Dr. William Beaumont, known for his pioneering research of the human digestive system.



Oakland Center Hospital

1942 — Royal Oak General Hospital

On Oct. 14, the City of Royal Oak entered into a contract with Dr. Albert P. Ohlmacher to purchase the Private Hospital in the Washington Square Building and its inventory for \$8,800. The hospital then closed for alterations and reopened in December 1942 as Royal Oak General Hospital. The staff of 20 employees and 11 nurses was retained. The city acted quickly because the hospital was scheduled to close as Dr. Ohlmacher was to report for active duty as an Army surgeon at O'Reilly General Hospital in Springfield, Missouri.

1953 — William Beaumont Hospital

On June 19, 1953, the first shovel of dirt was lifted to make way for a new hospital in Royal Oak. What was once the Sharp family farm, and land for a subdivision that was never built, is now a 1,070-bed academic, research, and referral center that ranks among the top hospitals in the United States for inpatient admissions and surgeries.

1955 — William Beaumont Hospital

The new hospital officially opened on Monday, July 12. The weekend before, an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 people attended an open house — the most to gather in South Oakland County for an event, according to *The Daily Tribune* — to view the five-story, 238-bed hospital, billed as the most contemporary of its time.



CardCow.com

William Beaumont Hospital

She did not run for reelection when her four-year term ended in 1953. She may have felt that she was ineffective in preventing the overburden of existing infrastructure, as she was usually the lone dissenter in approving multiple housing developments.

Even during her Commission years, Dr. Wagner continued to practice medicine and was a staff doctor at William Beaumont Hospital after it opened in January 1955. She continued in that role until her retirement in June 1963.

DR. WAGNER RECEIVED numerous honors over the years, including the Royal Oak Award of Merit in May 1952, which the Chamber of Commerce gave annually to an outstanding citizen. She was the first woman to win the award and was chosen by a board of five men and two women. The official description states that the award is "for being that person who has given most unselfishly of himself [at that time, a woman was not expected to win] in the service of the community." In 1958, she was named Michigan's Medical Woman of the Year by the American Medical Women's Association, and in 1961, Michigan State University recognized her as a Distinguished Alumna.

Dr. Ruth Wagner died in Grace Hospital in 1968 at age 76. She is buried in White Chapel Cemetery. Her most visible legacy today is Wagner Park, dedicated Oct. 22, 1956, and occupying 13.66 acres on the south side of Detroit Street between Main Street and Rochester Road. Her life legacy was best summarized at an honorary dinner at Red Run Country Club in 1959 when Mrs. Helen Gillmor, who was with Dr. Wagner when she passed, said her main passions in life were "people, especially the older ones to whom she will go at any hour, even if the need be more for comfort than medical care"; and her love of Royal Oak. She, indeed, was an "outstanding citizen." 🍷



Oakland Elementary School during one of many renovations



Oakland School 100 years later

YouTube

School District and located in Royal Oak Township. It had just four classrooms, a library, a girls' bathroom upstairs, a boys' bathroom downstairs, and an exterior fire chute.

The school's architect, Frederick D. Madison, designed the building to resemble a castle, with a façade that faced the Detroit United Railway, affectionately called the Toonerville

Trolley, which ran along what is now I-75. Oakland Elementary is believed to have been named after Oakland County.

SHORTLY AFTER OPENING, Oakland saw its first addition in 1925, again designed by Madison. For \$37,744, the school added two more classrooms, an office, a clinic, and two shower rooms, allowing enrollment to grow to more than 200 students by the 1930s.

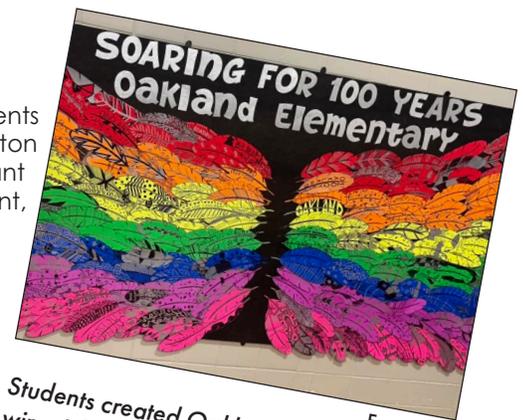
In 1942, the Royal Oak School District purchased Oakland Elementary. The sale upset some parents from Madison, leading them to remove everything from the building — even the lightbulbs. Enrollment dropped to just 96 students but soon rebounded, and the school began to grow once again.



Alumni and parents reminisce over scrapbooks and photos

By 1950, a second expansion was completed at a cost of \$300,000, adding eight classrooms, a new office, a kitchen, and a multipurpose room. With more than 800 students, Oakland was bursting at the seams. In 1953, a third addition was made, with eight more classrooms and two new bathrooms for \$200,000. Despite these expansions, the school remained overcrowded, forcing students to be bussed to Lockman and Mark Twain schools.

IN DECEMBER 1969, Oakland Elementary received national attention for its innovative programming. In 1975–76, students moved temporarily to Washington School during another significant renovation, including fresh paint, murals, carpeting, and a new media center.



Students created Oakland "spreading its wings" for the next 100 years.

Facebook

Oakland's most recent transformation began in 2020 with a multi-year renovation project. This effort upgraded the infrastructure, modernized instructional technology, and introduced new spaces to better serve students and staff.

Throughout its history, Oakland Elementary has continually evolved to meet the needs of its community, maintaining a legacy of growth, change, and educational excellence.

Welcome to new members of the Royal Oak Historical Society since January 1, 2024. To become a member, see Page 16.

- Bruce Allen
- Pat Antonick
- Rebecca Arce
- Robert Bolton
- Joseph Crawford
- Michael Daraskavich
- Sharlan Douglas
- Alice Finley
- Michael Fournier
- Nancy Greenia

- Robert Joseph
- Andrew Mestdagh
- Thomas Ochs, Jr.
- Peggy Ridgway
- Felix Schneider
- Gordon Sparks
- Rick Smith
- Rebekah St. James

The Royal Oak Historical Society thanks the following for donations received since January 1, 2024.

- Colleen Christopher, in memory of Rita Simons and Tom Christopher
- Robert Ciupak
- John Clark
- Robert and Bess Cook Foundation
- Sharlan Douglas
- Barbara Dursum

- Joann Fisher
- Wayne Kady
- Cynthia Motzenbecker
- Jennifer Nuechterlein
- Thomas Ochs
- Mark Ryan
- Jason Sandzik
- Mark Schneider

- Richard Schurrer
- Sherry Toggweiler
- Tom Toggweiler
- Carol Turner-Rollinson
- Jean Watson Trust

Royal Oak Musicale: Joyfully Sharing Music for 100 Years

By Ellen Kehoe

FROM FRENCH, a *soirée musicale* is literally a *musical evening* or, by other definitions, social entertainment with music featuring singing or the playing of musical instruments. The concept gained popularity in the 1870s. In 1885 in Detroit, a dozen women pianists established the Tuesday Musicale, seeking “to improve their performance skills and promote good music.” The group presented concerts by an impressive list of musical artists and was a vital supporter of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra’s early years.

Not many years later, on March 1, 1924, the Royal Oak Musicale — first known as the Monday Musicale of Royal Oak — was organized to “foster and promote music and musical interest in the community.” Two meetings were held each month at the Royal Oak Methodist Church. The first officers were Grace Davis, Pearl Weikel, Eva Kenaga, Doris Curtis, and Florence Miller.

A chorus was soon organized and performed on December 9, 1924, at the Methodist church, directed by Gladys Davis. Rounding out its first season was a program of Easter music in May 1925 with soloists Mrs. Louise Allmendinger and Mrs. Harold Roberts. The Christmas 1925 program was held at the First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak. In May 1927, Miss Clara Ellen Starr gave a talk on “The Modern Orchestra.”

In the spring of 1929, the chorus made its first appearance at the Michigan Federation of Music Clubs convention with participation in the combined chorus. The Royal Oak Musicale, a nonprofit organization with no religious affiliation, remains a member of both the Michigan and National Federation of Music Clubs.

AS MEMBERSHIP GREW, meetings were held at the Royal Oak Woman’s Club with performances at churches and community venues. From 1986 to 2023, activities were held at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Royal Oak. With Good Shepherd’s merger with other Lutheran churches and closing its building on Campbell Road, the Musicale’s activities are now at the First Congregational Church in Royal Oak.

Occasionally the Royal Oak Musicale met with other groups, such as a “delightful exchange program before a large and appreciative audience” on November 16, 1940, at the MacGregor Library in Highland Park with that city’s musicale. In 1946, a soloist from the Port Huron Musicale was featured, guest pianist Edith Facer Stricker, formerly of the LaVerne H. Brown School of Music in Royal Oak.

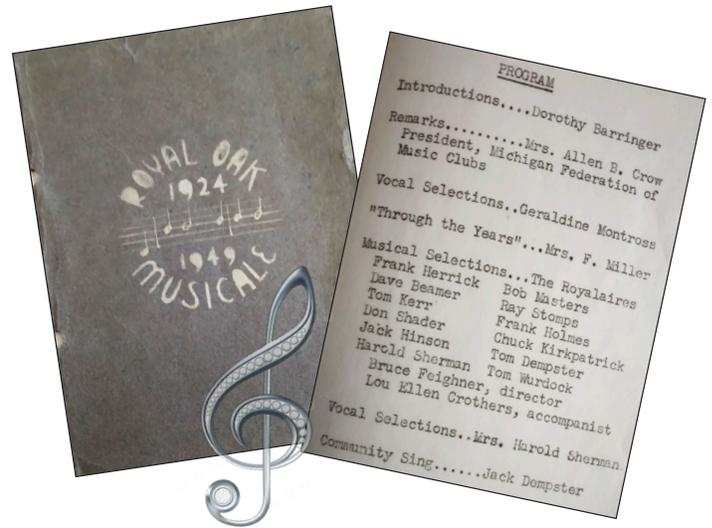
Programs over the organization’s 100 years have been as varied as Oriental art and music, South American music, student performers from the Detroit Conservatory of Music, a Ukrainian pianist, sacred sitar music, a lecture on old Italian music, a “Know Your Music” quiz, operettas, premiere compositions, jazz, Black American composers, and recorder concerts. With World War II ongoing, the November 23, 1943, meeting pondered “The Effect of Wars on American Music” through vocal performances.

In February 1955, a unique program evoking “the song of a cowboy on his horse, the hymn of a robed chorister, and the mechanized rhythms of George Gershwin depicted the American heritage of music” as the intangible equivalent of



Photograph courtesy of Diane Lowery Evey

Young Musicians members at the Royal Oak Woman’s Club, about 1968



A program from 1949 — the Musicale’s 25th year

the work of scientists and inventors. Members commented that the “unusual... excursion into our culture made an interesting trip, with varied scenery and important landmarks.”

THROUGHOUT THE YEARS, interest groups were formed within the Royal Oak Musicale, including the Young Musicians League, Opera Ensemble, Chorus, Madrigal Singers, Bell Choir, and Recorder and Drama groups. For 8- to 12-year-olds interested in music, the Young Musicians group was active into the late 1970s and met at the Royal Oak Woman’s Club and later at various schools. Mrs. Gwen Krupp was the long-time leader. A typical meeting would discuss music theory or a particular composer, followed by a musical performance.

The Royal Oak Musicale took to heart the Michigan Federation of Music Clubs’ “Healing

Continued on Page 13

Stories Behind the Gravestones

BY DON DRIFE



Royal Oak Creamery Founder Frank and Mary Springsteen

FRANK E. SPRINGSTEEN was a Royal Oak business owner, township supervisor, Oakland County supervisor, and city commissioner. Born July 6, 1871, in Detroit, he was the son of Nelson and Della Hall Springsteen. At age 7, his family moved to the north side of Eight Mile Road at Livernois Road. In 1880, they moved to the north side of 12 Mile Road at Crooks. Frank was educated in Royal Oak and Birmingham public schools, and at the Detroit Business University. On January 20, 1900, he married Mary V. Erb, daughter of Jacob and Catherine Erb of the lumber business fame. Mary worked as an insurance agent for many years. They had no children. Frank was struck and killed by a car while crossing Crooks Road on September 7, 1935.

In 1895, along with George and Strather Hendrie, Frank helped start the Detroit and Pontiac Street Railway (the interurban), bringing it into Royal Oak. In 1910, he owned one of three automobiles in the village. He served as freight agent for the railroad in Royal Oak before he founded Royal Oak Creamery around 1913. It was the first creamery in the village to pasteurize and deliver its own milk. Frank and Mary ("Mayme") lived in an apartment above the creamery until its sale in 1922. They then began construction of a cobblestone house on the former family farm on 12 Mile Road west of Crooks Road. The house is still standing and is a local landmark. Frank also ran a farm, breeding Jersey cattle and trotting horses. The horses were broken and trained at the farm. He was a member of the union and learned

blacksmithing and farriering. The 1930 U.S. census lists his occupation as a "Contractor Gen'l Building."

FRANK WAS politically active. From 1918 to 1919, he served on the township board of supervisors, the first Democrat on the board since his father was elected in 1891. Appointed to the Oakland County board of supervisors in 1926, he left the board when he was elected to the Royal Oak city commission. He served as a city commissioner from December 7, 1931, until his death in 1935.

The September 10, 1935, *Daily Tribune* referred to Frank "as tireless in his efforts to right conditions which he believed were wrong." Another article on October 24, 1933, noted the "demands of commissioner Frank E. Springsteen in one of his regular weekly investigations." Later in the article, he is accused of adding "a maze of oral comments" to a simple discussion. As a city commissioner he sued the city over the land contract used to purchase the city hall site, the contract to purchase voting machines, and the language of the gift deed for the Northwood fire station site. He lost all three cases.



Ad for Royal Oak Creamery in the Royal Oak Tribune, 1924

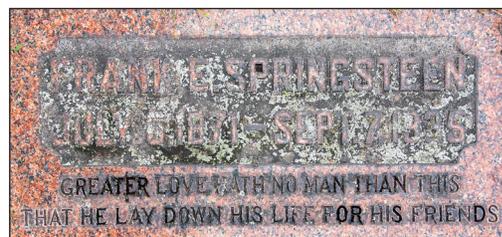
Frank fought to have the murder sentence of Anson Best commuted. Best was convicted in 1920 of the killing of Vera Schneider — a murder Best claimed never to commit. The case was well known in Michigan but today is largely forgotten. A bid to hold a retrial in 1931 was unsuccessful. Frank was walking home from a fundraising visit to benefit Best's case the night of his fatal accident. In 1936, after Frank's death, then-Governor Frank Fitzgerald commuted Best's life sentence to 25 years, making him eligible for parole. He was paroled in July 1936.

MARY V. SPRINGSTEEN was born in Royal Oak on July 26, 1874. She was educated in Royal Oak schools and active in the Royal Oak Woman's Club and the Professional Women's Club. She was also a member of the First Methodist Church in Royal Oak. From 1906 to 1914 she was a freight agent for the Detroit United Railway (the interurban). For 25 years she ran the Mary V. Springsteen Insurance Agency, selling general policies to individuals and businesses. Mary died August 4, 1940, after a brief illness.

Frank and Mary are buried in Royal Oak Cemetery, in the southwest corner of Section C. Frank's marker inscription from the Gospel of John reads: "Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends." Mary's is: "Dau[ughter] of Jacob and Catherine Erb Wife of Frank E. Springsteen."



Frank E. Springsteen, Royal Oak City Commission, 1931

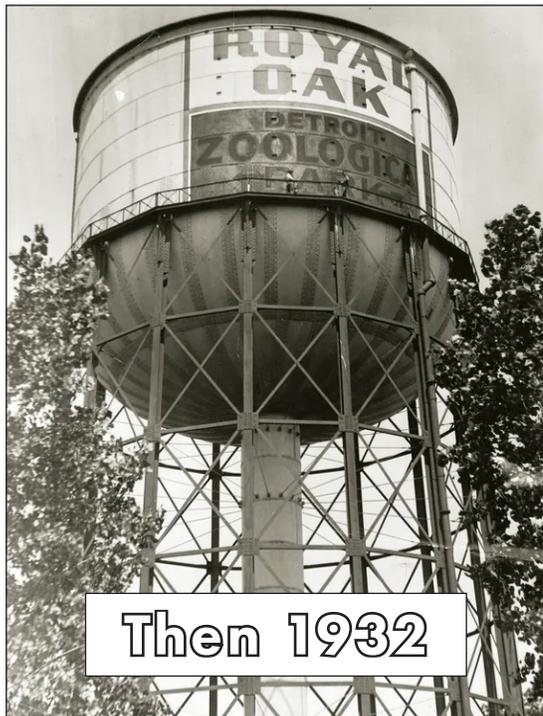


Grave markers of Frank and Mary Springsteen in Royal Oak Cemetery

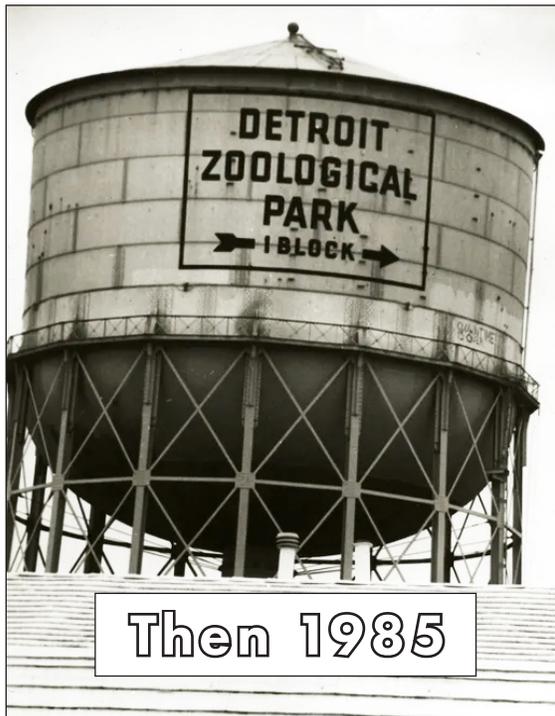
This series highlights people buried in Royal Oak's three cemeteries as we approach the bicentennial of Royal Oak Cemetery in 2026. If readers know other information on the featured person, please send it to editor@royalookhistoricalsociety.org.

Royal Oak Then & Now

BY JOHN MAURICE



Then 1932



Then 1985

THERE IS PERHAPS no landmark as identifiable with the City of Royal Oak as the Detroit Zoo water tower. Although much of the zoo lies within the border of the City of Huntington Woods, the 150-foot tower that serves as a beacon and a welcome to the southern entrance of our city is uniquely Royal Oak's.

First constructed in 1928, the same year the zoo opened, the 1.5-million-gallon capacity water tower hasn't performed the actual duty that it was built for since 1984.

From its construction and for many years after, the only decoration that existed on the exterior

of the tower was an arrow that pointed the way to the Detroit Zoological Park, "1 block" away. Beginning in the 1980s, the tower was decorated with pictures of animals and sometimes it included the name of the current mayor of Detroit. Perhaps more familiar to many of us, the Parade of Animals decoration adorned the tower for nearly 30 years until the most recent rebranding that took place earlier this year.

The **1932 Then** photo shows the original wording that was added to the tower shortly after its construction. The **1985 Then** photo depicts the tower as many of us might remember it throughout the 1970s and '80s. The **Now** photo shows the new look of the water tower after the overall rebranding of the zoo this year.

Big Water Storage Tank Contains More Steel Than Any In World

The monster tank being erected by the City of Royal Oak to store Detroit water will contain more steel than any similar tank in the world, City Manager R. J. Whitney said today. There are other tanks that hold as much water, 1,500,000 gallons, but none are as high. Fifty thousand steel rivets will be used.

There has been discussion of the location of the tank at its site between Washington and Lafayette avenues, north of the Ten-mile road. This was chosen for two reasons. First, the tank must be near Ten-Mile road, so as to connect with the 48-inch main coming out from Detroit. Second, it must be on high ground as possible. Every foot means hundreds of dollars in cost. The site selected was the highest available.

The 16 columns which support the tank will be 112 feet high. One third of these are now up. The central pipe which brings the water into the tank will be 90 feet high. The tank itself will be 50 feet high.

Engineers from all over the country will come to inspect this tank, Mr. Whitney predicted. In fact, many have already looked it over in the early stages of construction.

Fifteen million pounds weight will be carried on the foundation, which is 90 feet in diameter and something like a doughnut in shape. The engineers in charge have highly praised the work of the N. A. Starr company of Royal Oak in the foundation work, Mr. Whitney stated.

The big boom which is used to lift the steel was first set up inside the

big feed pipe. It has been lifted to the top of the pipe and from there will be used to swing the many tons of steel into place. One plate will be left out as the tank is built and the boom will eventually be taken apart and withdrawn through this opening.

Four riveting gangs will be at work on the tank before long and will make a din comparable with that of Detroit's business district when high buildings are going up.

Mr. Whitney declared all Royal Oak business men especially should visit the tank several times so as to be able to tell others of its progress.

R. D. Baker company will begin operations for the laying of the 48-inch main between Eight-mile road and the tank at Woodward near Lafayette avenues about the middle of the month, Edward M. Shafter, city engineer, said today. The construction of the hopster station on Livernais near Eight-mile road will be started soon.

Daily Tribune articles describe the construction of the water tower (left, April 6, 1928) and the plan to add the "1 block" and arrow pointing to the zoo (right, July 23, 1929)

ZOO PROPOSES SIGN TO MARK PARK ENTRANCE

Management Asks City's Approval of Plan To Aid Visitors

Permission to erect a large sign calling attention to the exact location of the Detroit Zoological park at Lafayette avenue and Ten-Mile road, has been asked of the City of Royal Oak by the zoo park commission.

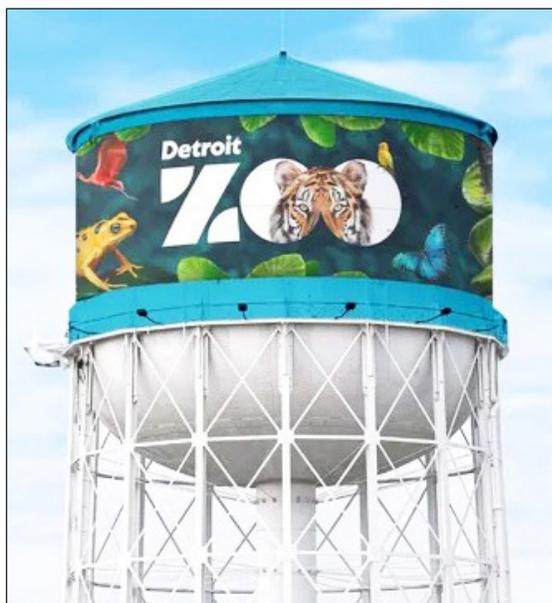
It is proposed to place the sign on the big water tank or tower of the North Woodward avenue water system, on the west side of Lafayette avenue and looming up high over Woodward avenue.

A tentative suggestion from the zoo commission is to paint a sign on both the north and south sides of the tank, under the words "Royal-Oak," which now are painted on the sides. Also arrows would point down toward the park entrance.

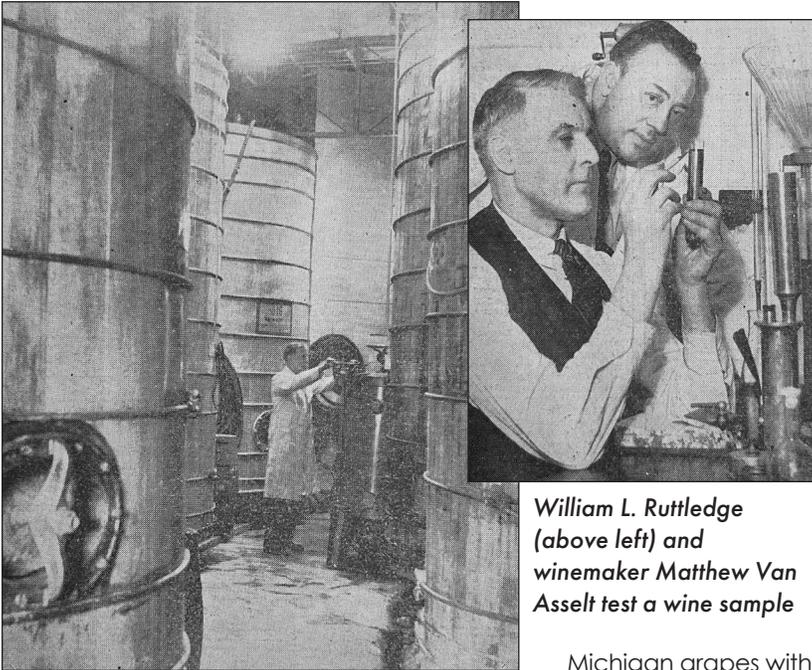
City Manager R. J. Whitney was asked to confer with zoo authorities on further details.

John T. Millen, director of the zoo, pointed out that such a marker would facilitate the movement of traffic, as many folks mill about the streets seeking the entrance.

Now



Photographs courtesy of the Detroit Free Press



William L. Ruttledge (above left) and winemaker Matthew Van Asselt test a wine sample

Daily Tribune photos, March 4, 1940

Francis R. Ruttledge (William's brother) at the Chateau Wines Corp. facility in Royal Oak. This room and one other house 30 large wine casks with a total capacity of 150,000 gallons.

more importantly to standardize the quality of Michigan wines. Member wineries included Chateau Wines and Twomey's LaSalle Wines. By 1939, there were several additional wineries in southern Michigan — seven in Detroit, one in Lapeer, and two in Paw Paw. The state legislature instituted tax advantages for Michigan wineries and maintained that any wines under 16% alcohol could be sold in drugstores as well as liquor stores. Since California wines had 16–18% alcohol, the Michigan market was ripe for lighter dessert wines in the 14–16% alcohol range.

IN THE FALL of 1939, the Michigan Wine Institute initiated “Wines-of-Michigan” — a public relations campaign aimed at educating the public about the “superior qualities” of Michigan wines. Restaurants, cafes, and wine retailers cooperated and posted window stickers in their businesses that advertised “Drink Wine with Your Dinner Tonight.” The institute also buoyed grape growers — in 1933, the average price of grapes was \$12 a ton; in 1939 it was more than \$45 a ton. The institute even encouraged the growing of Niagara and Delaware grapes and sponsored a grape festival. By 1948, the member wineries, as a group, were the largest buyer of Michigan grapes.



Ruttledge and Van Asselt noticed that some wine drinkers were not susceptible to hay fever, while others were. After four years of experimentation to find out why, they determined that certain salts in the wine prevented the effects of pollen. They developed a wine with added salts and called it Anti-Hayfever Medicinal Wine. The only problem was that it didn't taste very good.

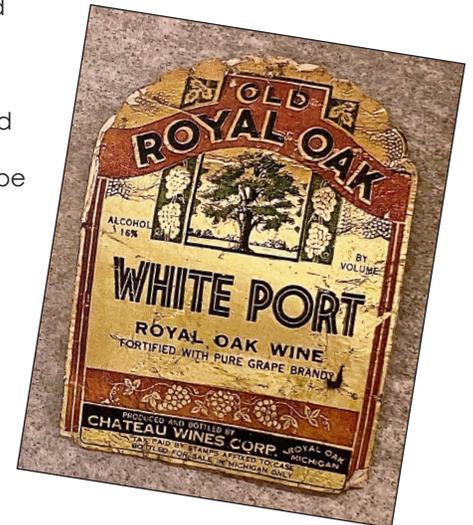
low in acid like sherry, muscatel, and port made of local Concord, Niagara, and Delaware grapes often fortified with brandy. In just two years, Michigan wineries produced more than 450,000 gallons of wine.

Meanwhile, Ruttledge was convinced by his uncle (who had produced wine in Dublin), to drop the pump manufacturing business and take advantage of this burgeoning wine industry. In 1934, he established Chateau Wines Corp. in Royal Oak with \$1,000 in capital. Sons Eamon and Charles were both involved in the business; Eamon later became the vice president and Charles secretary and treasurer. William's brother, Francis, was also involved in the processing early on.

THE FIRST WINE Chateau produced was called “Old Royal Oak” — a white port fortified with pure grape brandy. Port was a favorite wine in Ireland. However, Ruttledge realized that Michiganders did not have the same tastes as his Irish countrymen and he soon diversified. Ruttledge and his first winemaker, Matthew Van Asselt, began blending

Michigan grapes with California wines and brandy to make a better product, eventually expanding their product line to 17 different wines, including apple wine, an amber grape wine, muscatel, sauterne, and sherry.

In 1938, the state's winemakers, led by Maurice Twomey with the aid of the Michigan Department of Agriculture, established the Michigan Wine Institute to support the growth of the wine industry through promotion, research, and lobbying efforts, and



A label for Royal Oak's namesake white port wine, "Old Royal Oak," ca 1934–35

building a winery in 1943 in Harbert, on Red Arrow Highway south of St. Joseph, and moving the winemaking operation there in 1945. In May 1945, Ruttledge registered the trademark name “Molly Pitcher” in honor of the nicknamed Revolutionary War heroine who brought water to cool cannons and for soldiers to drink. The winery soon garnered a reputation for its Molly Pitcher wines.

Ruttledge still maintained the Royal Oak operations as well, building a \$4,000 addition to the store in 1946. The original Chateau Wines location on Woodward remained until about 1955. The next business listed at the address was a Top Hat hamburger restaurant in 1956.

CHATEAU WINES HIRED Rex Advertising Co. in Detroit, using billboards, direct mail, and television to promote its wines. The company also purchased the *Barry Wood Show*, a radio production, to be used in six Michigan markets three times a week to promote the firm's Molly Pitcher wines. In 1947, Art Sandveit moved from Royal Oak to Harbert to become Ruttledge's manager and second winemaker — a job he held for nearly 40 years. As production increased, the winery built a new facility in 1957 to house the offices and laboratory.

In 1960, Chateau Wines Corp. formally changed its name to Molly Pitcher Wines. During its peak in the 1970s, the winery could produce up to 2,000 cases of wine a day and was the largest grape processor in Berrien County. The wine was sold in 48 states and there were sales offices in six cities across Michigan. The laboratory was in the recesses of the building and had wine storage casks of varying sizes, some underground.

SADLY, IN JULY 1974, fire broke out in the building in Harbert at 4:30 a.m., originating in the laboratory and causing serious damage. A propane tank exploded, fueling the flames. Investigators believed that burglars broke in by breaking a glass window at the rear of the building and started the fire. Ruttledge was 90 years old and was ready to retire, so in 1975 the family sold the winery. At the time of the sale, they were producing 500,000 gallons of wine from their four acres of vineyards. William Ruttledge died in 1984 in St. Joseph at the age of 98.



Photograph courtesy of midwestwinepress.com

Fire destroyed the Harbert, Michigan, winery in 1974.



Photograph courtesy of the Detroit Historical Society

A Molly Pitcher billboard in September 1945 in Detroit, along Gratiot Avenue facing north at Adelaide Street

After the sale, the winery became Lakeside Vineyard, which went bankrupt in 1986. After several years, an investor reopened it as Berrien Vintners. Unfortunately, in June 1991, the owner was killed in an auto accident and a month later the winery was auctioned off.

The huge cypress vats (built into the building in 1943 and used to make wine) were acquired by a furniture maker. He planned to dismantle the vats piece by piece, plane them down, and make them into chairs. He said that "the smell of wine makes the furniture unique," not to mention the history of the winery. Finally, in 2008, the former Harbert production facility was converted into a luxury condominium development called The Vineyard Lofts. In front of the condominiums, the former Molly Pitcher tasting room is Café Gulistan, a Kurdish restaurant.

Musicale • Continued from Page 9

with Music" project in the 1960s. The goal was to train volunteers for music therapy programs in settings for geriatric and physically and mentally handicapped individuals and war veterans. Individual teachers of voice and piano also taught up to 40 private lessons per week.

In 1959-'60, members gave more than 400 volunteer hours working with patients at Pontiac state hospital, a Ferndale organization for the mentally handicapped, and Lafayette Clinic in Detroit. The number of hours was the most among Michigan Federation of Music Clubs and helped rank the state club third in the nation for the initiative. In 1964, the Royal Oak Musicale received an honorable mention for this project in the Federal Department Stores' 50th Anniversary Club Achievement Award competition.

THE MUSICALE HAS A TRADITION of long-term membership, with some active members in their 80s and 90s and many achieving 50 and 25 years of service.

The group proudly provides annual financial awards to talented high school seniors who plan to major in music, including performance, composition, theater, education, therapy, and business. Since 1974, the musicale has awarded more than \$250,000 in scholarships.

Currently, the Royal Oak Musicale supports a 25-member chorus and a 12-member madrigal group. It presents concerts on the third Tuesday of the month from September through May as well as does programs at assisted living residences. Concerts are free, open to the public, and feature talented local musicians. A schedule can be found at royaloakmusicale.com.



Photograph courtesy of *The Daily Tribune*

Royal Oak Musicale high school scholarship winners for 1995 cellist Andrew Hamric (left), soprano Rebecca Grady (at piano), and trumpeter Alan Oliphant prepare for a concert with the musicale chorus.

Looking Back

COLLECTED AND EDITED BY JOHN S. SCHULTZ FROM THE PAGES OF THE DAILY TRIBUNE

What was happening in Royal Oak in September and October...

50 years ago — 1974

A CHANGE IN ROYAL OAK school lunch policy for elementary pupils could mean space and money problems if too many parents elect to send pupils to school with their lunch. Children whose parents both work and those who must cross Woodward for school may now carry their lunches. Previously, elementary children who lived more than seven-tenths of a mile from school or come from single parent homes where the parent is employed could regularly carry their lunch. There is no hot lunch in any Royal Oak elementary school. The policy of distance and single parent homes was adopted to limit the numbers who stayed because of cafeteria space and the cost of supervision. The School Board made an exception last year for safety reasons for the children south of 13 Mile who attend Parker Elementary School near William Beaumont Hospital construction.

THE DERRIERE IS THE SEAT of many troubles. Its comfort, according to some, affects your thinking ability. Partly on this premise, Royal Oak School Board members investigated a collection of new chairs for themselves. They plopped themselves down in "conference-type" chairs and "executive-type" chairs offered by salesmen. "If we get new chairs, it will be the best deal since I came on the board," grinned James S. Thorburn, wiggling experimentally on a rubber-cushioned seat. However, a few apprehensions were expressed by board members who felt this might be an unneeded luxury, and by a teacher who thought what's good for board members is good enough for teachers — in other words, teachers should get chairs, too. Chair prices ranged from \$50 to \$180. Sighing contentedly as a bunch of tired shoppers at a furniture store, board members seemed to agree as they tested this and that model, they'll sit on the matter until next meeting.

From a Daily Tribune editorial: If 55 mph irks you, write your congressman.

IT APPEARS TRUE, as the state police director says, that above 60 has become the norm on the state's freeways. But the law is the law. If it's a bad law, get rid of it — legally, not by "tolerance" of lawbreaking especially on the highways. It may be that the public doesn't want the 55 limitations, doesn't feel the need to economize on gas, on a national basis, and isn't convinced that the lower speed saves lives. If so, let congress recognize the public temper. The 55 limit was set by the Michigan legislature under federal law that regulates conformity as the price of getting all those millions of highway dollars.

County road limits on freeways is ridiculous; but freeway speeds on county roads and city streets is homicidal. And perhaps more gas could be saved by careful driving habits than the 55 limit.

70 Years Ago — September 10, 1954 Lawson Lumber Remodel Unveiled



A new front dresses up the Lawson Lumber and Coal Company retail store at 605 South Main. The store's interior was remodeled, new displays, and more office space added. The store and office are the hub of operations for the company. Remodeling took four months.

60 years ago — 1964

ADMITTING THEY HAVE NO authority to block the project either, Royal Oak plan commissioners ordered a study of possible traffic congestion if a proposed drive-in restaurant is built at Thirteen-Mile and Woodward. Like city commissioners, planners emphasized they have no way of stopping a proposed \$500,000 drive-in, if it meets building requirements. Plan commissioners tabled the request of George Brody of Samuel Brody & Sons, Detroit, which has options on the land for approval of the site plan for the restaurant. Donald J. O'Malley, 3735 Mark Orr, pointed to possible traffic tie-ups. "I moved to Royal Oak because it was advertised as the City of Homes. I'd like to see it stay that way instead of becoming a city of auto washes or the city of drive-ins." O'Malley said.

WAYNE OAKLAND BANK has announced an expansion program and renovation in downtown Royal Oak which includes construction of a drive-in branch on Williams between Third and Fourth streets. Two buildings, the Acorn Restaurant and an auto repair garage, will be removed.

70 years ago — 1954

THE MYSTERY SURROUNDING a series of explosions in north Royal Oak has been solved with the arrest of seven "boom happy" youngsters, one of whom confessed setting off 100 blasts. Also in custody are the "playthings" that caused the booms and sent

residents to their telephones. Included in the noisemakers stored in the homes of the boys was a mixture of nitroglycerin possibly powerful enough to blow up two or three houses.

80 years ago — 1944

ROYAL OAK PROPERTY owners may again have trees planted in front of their property under a plan whereby the owner pays for the tree and the city will plant it for free. The City of Trees committee will offer trees for \$5 and \$10, the price to be governed by size. Trees must be purchased by Sept. 30 and will be planted in the middle of October. It was also announced that purchased trees which may have died during the summer drought will be replaced.

SOUTH OAKLAND COUNTY'S 27th case of infantile paralysis was reported to the district health office. The state department of health, at the same time, reported that Michigan's total stands at 621.

90 years ago — 1934

ROYAL OAK'S POPULATION is increasing, the registration for the first days of school reveals. Although approximately 200 pupils formerly in the Royal Oak system are planning to attend the new school of the Shrine of the Little Flower, the first day's attendance was 5,843 as compared to 5,841 a year ago. Attendance probably will reach 6,000 by Friday through late registrations. The new parochial school is expected to be opened by the Rev. Charles E. Coughlin, pastor of the Shrine of the Little Flower, Monday morning (Sept. 14) in the Marion L. Burton school at Scotia and Nadine in Huntington Woods. The vacant building will be rented for \$1,800 for 1934-35 and \$2,500 for 1935-36.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH ACTION by other local high school facilities, teachers have made special arrangements so that students may receive radio descriptions of the World Series games this week between the Detroit Tigers and the St. Louis Cardinals. A reporter system has been arranged so that pupils in classes will be given inning reports of the progress of the games, both in high schools and grade schools. The school superintendent feels that this system will provide the students information and not disrupt classes.

MOTORISTS STOPPED to pick up apples off Woodward Avenue in Royal Oak last night (Sept. 14) and traffic in the southbound lane was tied up for nearly a half hour at 9:40 p.m. Bushels of the fruit were spilled over the avenue when a truck driver, Fred McNabb, age 29, overturned when he swerved to avoid hitting another car. McNabb did his best to salvage his cargo, but so many bushels of apples spread around were too much for one man to protect. McNabb told police that he was forced to swerve to avoid hitting a car driven by Mrs. Mary F. Bullion, age 41, when she slowed down for a red light.

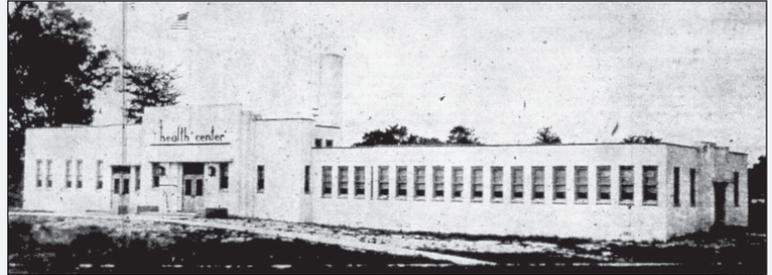
100 years ago — 1924

STATE, COUNTY, CITY, AND VILLAGE officials participated Saturday (Sept. 27) in the dedication of the first strip of the Stephenson super-highway, completed and opened for the first half mile from Nine and a half to Ten Mile. Several thousand persons attended the formal opening of the 204-foot highway, the first to be constructed in accordance with the plans of the Detroit Rapid Transit commission and the Detroit City Plan commission, which have laid out a scheme covering territory 30 miles beyond the limits of Detroit city proper. The super-highway is a continuation of Oakland Avenue in Highland Park, extending to Oakland County from Eight Mile to Eleven Mile. Declaring that Stephenson Highway is America's answer to the 20th century transportation needs, Sidney Waldon, chairman of the Rapid Transit commission, said it is an eastern traffic header for the downtown business district and the Memorial Hall waterfront development and will pass the Ford Motor Company.

VINSETTA PARK IS WITHOUT STREETLIGHTS and has been for nearly two weeks. This as the result of the final collapse of the system which the City of Royal Oak took over some time ago and which it in turn intended to deed to the Detroit Edison company. The company, however, after examining the system, refused to accept it. Since then, the city has maintained the system and the Edison company has provided the current. Ten overhead streetlights are to be installed at once and the old Boulevard system abandoned, the commission voted Monday night, after a committee from Vinsetta Park had asked for relief. In view of great demands made upon the streetlight funds, which are so large that many streets are still without lights, the commission voted to spend for Vinsetta lights the same amount it spent for current on the boulevard lights when the system was taken over. This will provide 10 overhead lights.

APPROXIMATELY 2,000 ROYAL OAK students trudged off to school this week (September 10-15). There are a least 600 students enrolled in high school and 300 others in junior high. 🍁

80 Years Ago — September 1944 South Oakland County Health Office Opens



Southern Oakland County's new health center, Fourth Street at Stephenson Highway, hosted two public open houses of the \$85,000 building, which was constructed with federal funds on a site provided by the county. The center houses the offices of the county department of health for this area, four clinics, and an auditorium for public health instruction. Dr. R.G. Tucker, deputy county health commissioner, is director of the center.



ROYAL OAK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
 1411 West Webster Rd. • Royal Oak, MI 48073
 248.439.1501 • ROYALOAKHISTORICALSOCIETY.COM



We Need YOU!

VOLUNTEERS & DOCENTS

Fun & Educational

Contact Us at

curator@royaloakhistoricalsociety.org

(248) 439-1501

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



ROYAL OAK
Historical Society

1411 West Webster Road
 Royal Oak, MI 48073 • (248) 439-1501
 royaloakhistoricalsociety.com

**MEMBERSHIP AND
 DONATION FORM**

Name _____

Address _____

Phone # (cell) _____ (home) _____

Email Address _____

The date on the mailing label is your membership renewal date.

PLEASE INDICATE MEMBERSHIP DONATION LEVEL:

Individual: \$30 _____ Family: \$50 _____ Club: \$200 _____ Sponsorship: \$300 _____ Benefactor: \$500 _____

Membership Has Its Perks! For information about membership levels and benefits, please visit our website: royaloakhistoricalsociety.com

GENERAL DONATION: \$ _____

Thank You for Your Support!

Make checks payable to: Royal Oak Historical Society, 1411 W. Webster Road, Royal Oak, MI 48073

Dues also are payable online at royaloakhistoricalsociety.com. Click on the Membership link to pay or set up automatic annual dues payment. For more information about membership levels and benefits, visit the website.