



# ROYAL OAK *Historical Society*

JULY 2021 • ROYALOAKHISTORICALSOCIETY.COM

ROYAL OAK CENTENNIAL 1921–2021

## 100 Years Ago, All Roads Led to Royal Oak

*By Bob Muller, ROHS President*

In June, Royal Oak celebrated its 100th birthday as a city. Today, Royal Oak is one of several inner-ring suburbs that surround Detroit. These small cities have grown until they touch each other. We cross a road and are in another city, but nothing looks different. You need to be in a metro area for this to happen. Typically, if you leave a town, you drive through rural areas until you come to the next town. I am a lifelong resident of Royal Oak and have lived through most of three-quarters of its history, so I guess I am a little historical myself at this point! I have lived within a mile of downtown Royal Oak for my entire life. Except for the loss of some undeveloped pieces of land, Royal Oak looks about the same as it did when I was a boy more than 65 years ago. But what was it like as Royal Oak changed from a village to a city 100 years ago?



Photograph courtesy of the Royal Oak Historical Society

***In 1921, Royal Oak was growing at a fast rate and farms were quickly being subdivided, like the neighborhood above, to meet the demand.***

In 1921, Royal Oak was a boomtown — very similar to a gold rush town — except the gold here was jobs. In 1916, there were 43 different automobile manufacturers in southeastern Michigan. Sixty-one percent of the cars sold in 1921 were the Ford Model T. They cost \$400 — equivalent to \$11,000 today, which made it affordable. The major problem with a boomtown was people were moving here so fast that the infrastructure couldn't keep up. My grandfather moved to Ferndale, not Royal Oak, in 1920. My father told me that people were living in tents then waiting for their house to be built. When we became a city, Ferndale, Pleasant Ridge and Clawson were villages, although only Pleasant Ridge touched Royal Oak. The rest of the area was township property, but its farms were quickly being subdivided and covered with new homes.

Things we take for granted today were just being developed. Most roads were dirt, so getting stuck in the mud in the spring was a normal occurrence. And in the dry summer, the sandy soil could be as loose as a beach and getting stuck in it also posed a problem. Paving the roads provided the answer. In 1909, the first mile of paved road in the U.S. was Woodward Avenue from Six Mile to Seven Mile roads. By 1916,

*Continued on Page 5*



**Information on  
Page 4**

**OUR ANNUAL CAR SHOW  
FUNDRAISER IS BACK!**

ROYAL OAK  
*Historical Society*

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ROYAL OAK  
*Historical Museum*

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Royal Oak, MI 48073

royaloakhistoricalsociety.com

(248) 439-1501

Hours: Tues., Thurs., Sat., 1-4 p.m.

See our Covid-19 protocols at  
royaloakhistoricalsociety.com/  
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**CURRENT EXHIBIT**

Royal Oak's Centennial

March 6 through July 12



## Historic Oaks Planted at Museum

Two historic oak trees are now found in the museum's lawn. One was given away in honor of Oakland County's bicentennial and is a Swamp White Oak.

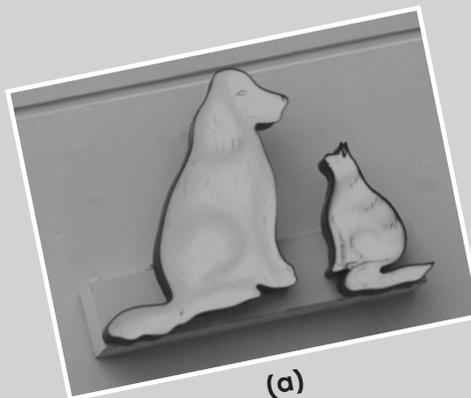
The other is a great-grandchild of the "Royal Oak" at Boscobel House in England that Charles II took shelter in after his defeat at the Battle of Worcester in 1651.

ROHS president Bob Muller raised this tree from acorns picked up at the English Grove in Memorial Park.



Story and photograph by Donald Drife

**Left to right: John Semchena, Bob Muller, and Ken Caldwell planting oak trees at the Royal Oak Historical Museum.**



(a)



(c)

## Photo Game



(b)

**This issue's Photo Game features animals in signs on or along Woodward Avenue.**

Answers on Page 15  
Photographs by Bob Muller

# Homes & Buildings in Royal Oak

EDITED BY JOHN S. SCHULTZ

In each issue, this feature focuses on historic homes and buildings in our city. The selections come from the book *Royal Oak Images, Yesterday's Charm Today's Treasures*, published by the Roundtable of Royal Oak Historical Organizations, a standing committee of the Royal Oak Historical Commission of the City of Royal Oak. The book was published in 2006, and a second edition is in the works.

We encourage other Royal Oak residents to share the history of their home for possible publication. For more information, contact John S. Schultz at [jsschultz11@gmail.com](mailto:jsschultz11@gmail.com).

## Weitzel House

320 Crane Avenue

Italianate Style House Built in 1920

Designs of Italianate homes often resemble Italian country villas and were very popular around 1845-1885. This style of house continued to be admired in many parts of the country even after 1885 and well into the early 20th century.

Italianate-style houses of various sizes exhibit a stately elegance, and this house is no exception. Common characteristics of this almost square box style house often included low-pitched hipped roofs, extended overhanging eaves and slender tall arched windows and doors, often with ornate carvings surrounding the doors. The Weitzel House, built in 1920, is one of the rare homes exhibiting many of the characteristics of this style to be found in Royal Oak.

Built by George E. Weitzel as his family home, he and his wife, Anna, and son, George C. Weitzel, lived there most likely until his death sometime

*Continued on Page 5*



THE ROYAL OAK  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
MUSEUM *Presents*

**WOODWARD MEMORIES**

# 2021 CAR SHOW

SATURDAY AUGUST 7TH 10 AM-3 PM



Pre-register online or at museum  
Car show registration fee: \$15  
Includes Chance to Win \$100 prize  
Dash plaques to first 100 entrants

*Plus Fun for Everyone...*

**AUTOMOTIVE CONCEPT ART SHOW**

**MEET THE DESIGNERS**

**OPENING RECEPTION: FRIDAY AUGUST 6TH 7-9PM**

• Refreshments & Dessert • Classic Cars Welcome -Priority Parking  
\$10 donation at the door

EXHIBITION DATES: AUGUST 3RD – SEPTEMBER 11TH

**THE ROYAL OAK HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM**

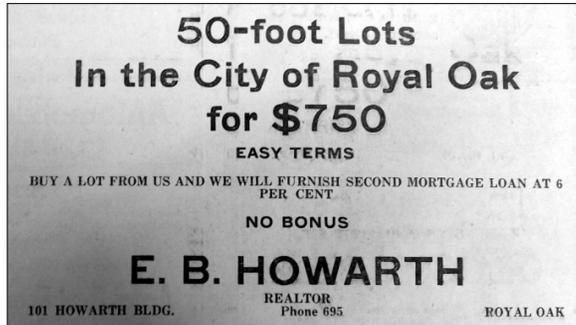
1411 W. Webster, Royal Oak, MI 48073 (248) 439-1501 [royaloakhistoricalsociety.org](http://royaloakhistoricalsociety.org)

MUSEUM HOURS: Tue, Thurs, Sat - 1 to 4pm



## 100 Years Ago • Continued from Page 1

the entire 27 miles from downtown Detroit to Pontiac were paved. Red Run, the river that flowed through Royal Oak, was used as the drain for the farms. With 50-foot



**50-foot Lots  
In the City of Royal Oak  
for \$750**

**EASY TERMS**  
BUY A LOT FROM US AND WE WILL FURNISH SECOND MORTGAGE LOAN AT 6 PER CENT  
**NO BONUS**

**E. B. HOWARTH**  
REALTOR  
101 HOWARTH BLDG. Phone 695 ROYAL OAK

lots and houses filling the area, Red Run was no longer sufficient, and underground sewer systems were built. Good roads and sewers fostered the development in our city. In the late 1920s and early '30s, the Great Depression brought this growth to a screeching halt, but World War II armament brought another wave of jobs and development.



1927  
Photograph courtesy of the Royal Oak Historical Society

Royal Oak's downtown was the local commercial center and was about the same size as it is today. The communities that surrounded Royal Oak never developed true downtowns. For example, Ferndale's city center is the crossroads of Woodward and Nine Mile and Berkley's is along 12 Mile. A downtown formed by multiple streets in a grid pattern only exists here and in Birmingham, which were the towns that were here before the 1920s.

The booming population of the 1920s necessitated the building of a new Royal Oak high school, which later became Dondero High School when Kimball High School was built in 1957. (The school is now Royal Oak Middle School.) Additionally in the 1920s and again in the late 1950s and early '60s during the baby boom years, many elementary and junior high schools were built — many of which are now gone.

**Editor's Note:** For a presentation on how Royal Oak became a city, see Bob Muller's video entitled "The Growth of the Village and City of Royal Oak" on our website, [royaloakhistoricalsociety.com](http://royaloakhistoricalsociety.com).

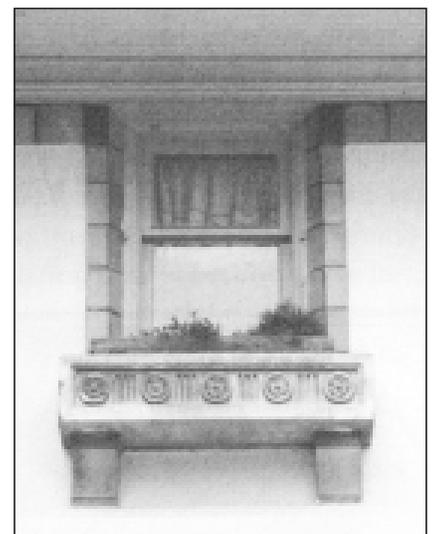
**Underground sewer systems began to replace open drainage creeks such as Red Run.**

## Weitzel House • Continued from Page 3

after 1930. His son then lived in the house until the 1950s, when a family with 13 children purchased the home. As of 2006, the home was owned by Fred J. Lyons and his family.

The senior George Weitzel was a builder of numerous homes in the 1920s in Royal Oak, with the 1920 census listing his occupation as a manager for Village Construction and the 1930 census listing his occupation as in real estate.

The home at 320 Crane is a wonderful example exhibiting many aspects of the Italianate style with its stucco exterior, arched panel windows and beautifully carved doorway surround. The doorway surround shows carved limestone medallions with a large fruit basket garniture above the door having vines of leaves trailing from the basket. A windowbox on the second level sits directly above the door and also shows the same medallion-type carvings as the doorway entrance. It is believed there are Pewabic Pottery tiles near the roofline of the house.



**Left: Carved medallions with a large fruit basket garniture surround the front entrance. Right: Medallion-type carvings and Pewabic Pottery tiles line the window and roofline.**

# By the Numbers: Food and Goods in 1921 and 2021

By Judy Davids, community engagement specialist, City of Royal Oak

	1921	2021	Percentage Increase	Royal Oak Store: 1921	Royal Oak Store: 2021
Pint of milk	\$0.07	\$0.99	1,314	Finkel Cash Market	Kroger
Bar of soap	\$0.06	\$1.50	2,400	Miner & Valentine	Meijer
Can of Crisco	\$0.19	\$2.99	1,474	Miner & Valentine	Meijer
Sugar (5 lb.)	\$0.45	\$2.48	451	C.E. Daas	Meijer
Tomato puree	\$0.06	\$2.19	3,550	Miner & Valentine	Meijer
Pint of ice cream	\$0.35	\$4.99	1,326	Leach & McDonald Inc.	Meijer
Loaf of bread	\$0.13	\$4.49	3,354	Royal Oak Bakery	Bread by Crispelli's
Soft drink	\$0.06	\$1.00	1,567	Olympia Confectionary Ice Cream Parlor	McDonald's
Men's suit	\$10.00	\$129.99	1,200	J.F. Codling	Todd's Menswear
Electric iron	\$4.00	\$19.99	400	Lawson Lumber & Coal  Ad in <i>The Daily Tribune</i> , 1924	Meijer
Maytag electric washer	\$155.00	\$649.00	319	Lawson Lumber & Coal	A-Dependable Maytag
Eureka vacuum	\$69.95	\$59.97	-14	Smith & Crampton  Store interior. Northeast corner of Center and Fourth, 1926	Home Depot
Record player	\$113.25	\$149.99	32	J.B. Sparks	Best Buy
Piano	\$298.00	\$899.99	202	Grinnell Brothers	Guitar Center

Source: Ads in *The Daily Tribune* digital archives. Photographs courtesy of the Royal Oak Historical Society.

All numbers are for 1921 and are based on stores located in Royal Oak. (A vacuum is actually cheaper today!) Where possible, a comparable Royal Oak store in 2021 is listed.

Inflation increased 1,400 percent. Inflation calculator: \$100 in 1921 would be worth \$1,504 in 2021 according to smartasset.com.

# Royal Oak Then & Now

BY JOHN MAURICE, ROHS FACEBOOK EDITOR

Early  
1900s



Photograph courtesy of the Royal Oak Historical Society

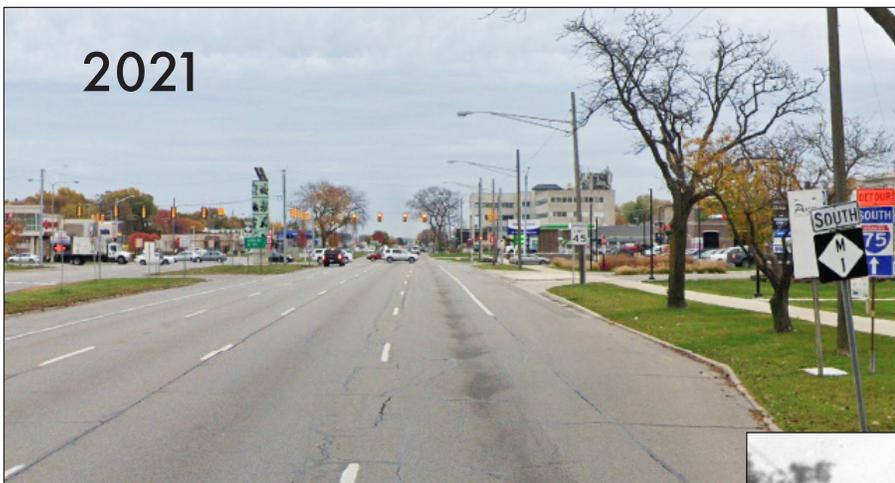
Any discussion about cars, the Motor City and our area's rich history with motor vehicles will inevitably include some talk of Woodward Avenue, the main traffic artery running from the Detroit River up to Pontiac. In the summertime when thoughts turn to the annual Woodward Dream Cruise, the unofficial center of activities has always been the intersection of 13 Mile Road and Woodward. In the early 1900s, Woodward cut a path through mainly farm country as it made its way through Royal Oak.

The early 1900s photograph (top left) is from the vicinity of the Ralzemond Parker

farm, which stood southwest of where Woodward and 13 Mile intersect today. The trees at the right side of the photo are actually on the front lawn of the Parker homestead.

At that time, the Grand Trunk Western Railroad lines still ran down the center of Woodward. These would be relocated as part of the widening of Woodward in the late 1920s and early '30s, with work completed when the new rail line was opened officially on August 1, 1931.

2021



Photograph courtesy of Google Maps

Once the railroad tracks were relocated, the stage was set for Woodward Avenue to become the gateway to our city and the northern part of Oakland County.

Today, Woodward in Royal Oak carries an estimated 65,000 cars daily. In just over 100 years, it has been transformed from a narrow, dusty dirt road to become one of the busiest roadways in the state. There's a good chance that if you meet somebody from outside of Royal Oak and tell them where you live, the name Woodward Avenue will be familiar to them.

Photograph courtesy of the Royal Oak Historical Society

*Here's a different view of Woodward —  
looking north into Birmingham, 1916.*

1916



# Looking Back

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

## What was Happening in Royal Oak in June:

### 50 years ago — 1971

**ROYAL OAK POLICE PLAN** to patrol tonight in the vicinity of Northwood Shopping Center, Woodward and Thirteen Mile, after a disturbance Thursday night (June 17). Police from Royal Oak and other South Oakland communities were called to disperse a group of 200-300 young persons.

Thursday's disturbance began before 9 p.m. after a 20-year-old made three attempts to buy a bottle of wine at Cunningham's Drug Store with identification which, according to the store manager, showed his age as 20. A store clerk refused the sale. The disturbance ended with the store closed, a carnival in the center's parking lot closing, dispersal of the crowd south of Woodward and five arrests. There were no injuries. Two store windows were shattered, according to a company spokesman.

\*\*\*

**IN 100 DEGREE HEAT** Sunday (June 27), concrete buckled on freeways, Detroit Edison set a record for electricity use and near record numbers headed to area parks.

Metro water authorities expect today's water use will break the record high, set only last week. At the Fairgrounds, rows of motorcycles exhibited fell on their sides as their kickstands sunk into the asphalt. *The Daily Tribune's* recording thermometer registered 101 degrees at 3:25 p.m. Sunday. It stayed around the 100 degree mark until 5 p.m. Previous high, almost 10 years ago, was 100 on June 30, 1961.

### 60 years ago — 1961

**A HOUSE-TO-HOUSE** search for unlicensed dogs — and handing out of \$5 fines to owners of animals without licenses — is underway. The canvass, conducted by a six-man crew, has become an annual event.

### 70 years ago — 1951

**THE 23 PERCENT** insurance rate increase for automobile public liability and property damage will cost most South Oakland car owners an additional \$4 a year, the Royal Oak Association of Insurance Agents said today.

### 75 years ago — 1946

**ANGLE PARKING** of automobiles will be permitted on only four of Royal Oak streets after June 20, according to the parking ordinance as amended by the city commission.

### 80 years ago — 1941

**THE ROYAL OAK CHAMBER** of Commerce intends to take over the former Northwood Auditorium facing Woodward Avenue north of Twelve Mile Road and sponsor it as a community building, it was revealed by Thomas M. Ryan, board secretary.



Photograph courtesy of *The Daily Tribune*

**1971 — THE FENCE** surrounding the yard at the home of Bert Poole, 1322 Butternut, Royal Oak, is 120 years old. Poole acquired the fence 19 years ago when a church at the corner of Thirteen Mile and Crooks was destroyed by fire. Poole, age 63, says the fence is oak, and he paints it nearly every year to preserve it.

\*\*\*

Continued on Page 9

## Looking Back • Continued from Page 8

**WITH DEMAND** for telephone service at Royal Oak reaching an unprecedented peak, the Michigan Bell Telephone Company announced today (June 9) that a \$113,000 equipment expansion at its Royal Oak central office is scheduled to be completed by September.

Under the plan, Lincoln 1 or Lincoln 2 customers wishing to call a local number will ask the operator for Royal Oak 1234, Lincoln 1-2345 or Lincoln 2-3456. Anyone calling from Detroit or any other nearby community will follow the same practice.

\*\*\*

**THE CITY OF ROYAL OAK** agreed to assume its share of the cost of widening and re-surfacing Main Street, between Crooks and Clawson Road in cooperation with the Oakland County Road Commission and the City of Clawson.

### 90 years ago — 1931

**ROYAL OAK HAS JOINED** with 15 other communities in the Detroit Metropolitan area to request the Detroit board of water supply to sell Detroit Water to several communities at reduced rates.

\*\*\*

**DR. R.B. HASNER**, 1312 Vinsetta Boulevard, won a gun battle with three bandits at 2:35 a.m. today (June 24), probably wounding one of them. Dr. Hasner had just returned from a call. As he closed his garage door after putting his automobile away, two men told him to "Stick 'em up." Instead, the doctor whipped out his revolver and opened fire. The pair retreated to a large automobile in which a third waited, firing over their shoulders as they went. One bandit appeared to be wounded.

\*\*\*

**SPECIAL COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES** for Florence Comer, the only graduate of the Log Cabin High School, were held and attended by a large crowd. **Editor's Note:** *The first school in Royal Oak was a log building between Fifth and Sixth streets on Williams.*

### 95 years ago — 1926

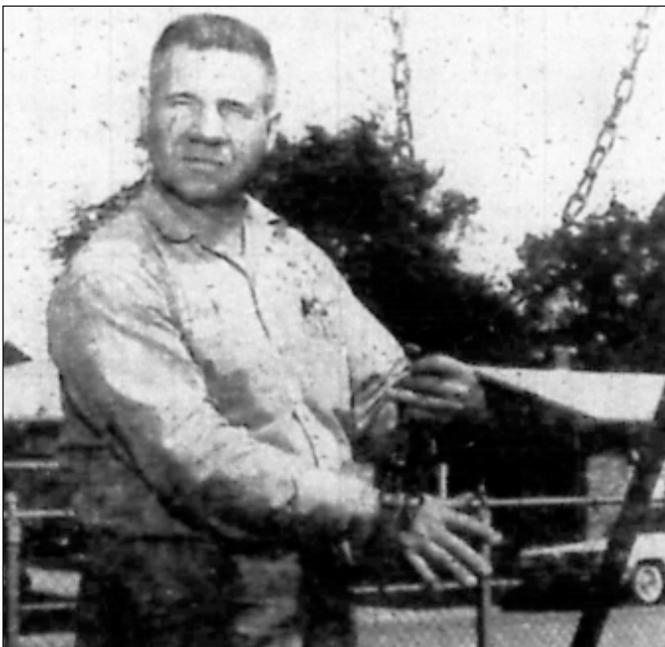
**A SPECIAL ELECTION TO VOTE** on the question of bonding School District No. 6, Royal Oak, for \$150,000 for erecting a grade school on Mohawk and Hudson streets will be held at the U.S. Grant school on Saturday, June 26, between the hours of 2 and 8 p.m.

This school will take care of all the children south of Lincoln Avenue and east of the Grand Trunk railway. At present, this district is served by the U.S. Grant school and a three-room temporary building. The Grant school is filled to capacity and a year from now will be badly congested. A building on Mohawk will relieve this congestion and at the same time give a school to people of the southeast section of the district. **Editor's Note:** *The bond passed, and Franklin Elementary School was built in 1927.*

\*\*\*

**A COMMITTEE OF 10**, appointed by the mayor, will begin at once (June 9) a study of the feasibility and cost of a hospital in Royal Oak. "I don't know what the costs would be or what the main problems are," Mayor Storz said. "I would like to know. The doctors could aid us in sizing up the problem. It is with increasing difficulty that we are able to get cases into the Detroit hospitals now and many bad situations are arising here because of the lack of a hospital."

*Continued on Page 12*



Photograph courtesy of *The Daily Tribune*

**1961 — VANDALS** apparently sawed through the chains of the swings at Jane Addams Elementary School in Royal Oak and took the swing seats. Custodian William C. Rock examines results of the first case of vandalism reported in the district since school let out last week.

# "What Do You Love..."

In honor of Royal Oak's 100th birthday, the students of Royal Oak were invited to put their creative talents to work answering this question. These entries were received in time for this issue, but many other works were submitted from all grade levels and are now on display at the Royal Oak Historical Museum. Stop by and see what the next generation loves about our city!

## WHERE I AM FROM

I am from tumbling down the hill at Pioneer Park, grass tickling my bare skin  
From the Jolly Pumpkin and Made in the Mitten  
From the Main Art Theater  
Its neon sign luminous overhead  
I am from pennies tossed into the library fountain  
The broad oak for which the town was named  
Whose once robust limbs live on in memory

I am from isochronal concerts at the Detroit Zoo midst the summer months  
From the musky smell of yellowing folios  
From the once sinuous river  
Whose sequestered remains lay hidden 'neath the earth

I am from kites sailed at Sullivan Park  
The Woodward Dream Cruise  
Ancient cars reestablished to their former glory, boisterous engines revving

I am from baked bread at the Farmers Market spattered with homemade jam  
From basins sculpted by affectionate hands  
From photographs captured at Tenhave Woods  
Cheeks ablaze against the milky snow  
I am from promenading about downtown  
The fields tilled many score ago  
Now chiseled by concrete and asphalt  
I am from the city of trees  
I am from Royal Oak

— Morgan, 8th grade, Royal Oak Middle School



Royal Oak, Royal Oak the best place to be.  
Royal Oak Royal Oak is a city for you and me.  
The city is diverse, kind, and fair  
and we should always know the city cares.  
So as I said,  
Royal Oak, Royal Oak the best place to be.  
Royal Oak Royal Oak is a city for you and me.

— Chidubem, 6th grade, Royal Oak Middle School

## About Royal Oak?"

Many thanks to Sarah Bockhausen, Royal Oak Middle School teacher and history club sponsor, for her wonderful idea and for coordinating the submission process.

The sky is always pretty.  
Those grapefruit & champagne skies with a drop of lavender,  
Layered beneath a breath of cotton dispersed in the atmosphere.

But more often appears a bunny rabbit grey,  
Along with the occasional cyan of an artist's paint water & a grand canary sphere — the sun.

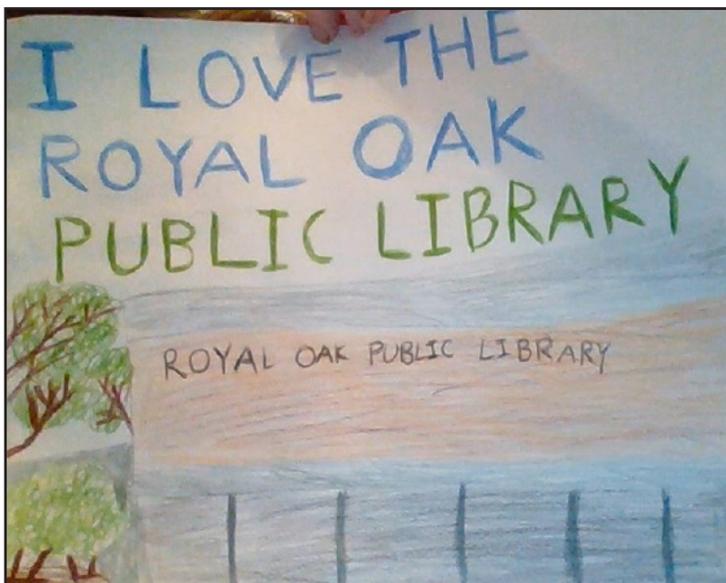
But doesn't this blanket cover all?  
But it still covers us.

The gentle breeze combing through the limbs and branches of spoken snowflake leaves,  
The remembrance of the past but a magnifying glass of the future.

But to die in the autumn months & to rise with the sun comes shades of kiwis and avocados.  
Only to grasp 'til the clock runs high under the starlight.

And a centennial of skies,  
10 decades worth of blossoms,  
Frothed into the roots of ancestors and descendants of all to come,  
Is a Narnia that lies inside a wardrobe with walls of oak.

— Anna, 8th grade, Royal Oak Middle School



— Lauren, 6th grade, Royal Oak Middle School



100 years ago — 1921

**THIS WEEK'S ISSUE** of *The Royal Oak Tribune* is the first since Oct. 1, 1919 which Lynn S. Miller has not edited. He is visiting his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Merritt J. Miller, in Oneonta, N.Y. and also will attend the reunion of the Class of 1914 at Wesleyan University in Middleton, Conn. Floyd J. Miller, the older of the "Miller Boys" who took over the newspaper in 1919, edited this week's paper in addition to his duties as manager of *The Tribune* and director of the reference department of *The Detroit News*.

\*\*\*

**JAMES B. DUNKEL**, formerly credit manager of the Mellen-Wright Lumber Company, is now its secretary and general manager, succeeding Joseph F. Graves, who resigned to enter his own business. Graves came to Royal Oak in 1910 to manage the Royal Oak Lumber Company, absorbed by Mellen-Wright in 1911. There were only two lumber yards in the village and each depended on a one-horse dray for delivery.

## 1927: Codling's Watch Drop

By Donald Drife

One Saturday evening in the summer of 1927, Codling's jewelry store dropped two Americus "shockproof" wrist watches out of an airplane flying 2,000 feet above "Codling Corners" at Third and Main streets. An advertisement in the August 17, 1927, *Daily Tribune* invited lucky spectators to gather the following evening for the excitement. Streamers attached to the cardboard boxes containing the watches permitted the spectators to observe the progress of the falling watches. The main prizes were one ladies' wristwatch and one gent's strap watch. This unique demonstration highlighted the watch manufacturer's shockproof claims. If any damage occurred to the watch, the finder would receive an undamaged Americus watch valued at \$50. Codling's also dropped "other numerous articles of valuable merchandise" and 10,000 coupons worth "\$2.50 each in trade on any merchandise in our entire store."

Flying from the Royal Oak Flying Club, or ROFC, field at 15 Mile and Crooks roads, the plane carried pilot Paul Eberle and Royal Oak police traffic sergeant Thomas Carroll, who also served as club secretary. Airplanes were still a novelty and added to the evening's excitement; just three months earlier, the ROFC had received its first airplane. Eberle flew the plane while Carroll threw the prizes from the tail of the plane. They distributed the coupons over several cities in the hour before the main event.

Fourteen-year-old Edward Chase recovered the man's watch. It was damaged when it landed, striking a rock and cracking its crown. Codling's replaced the crown. As Mrs. John Thornton stepped out on her porch, a watch fell between her feet from the sky. The woman's watch was undamaged. It landed six blocks from the intended drop site, and she didn't know of the publicity stunt until she called the jewelry department. Codling's dropped at least 25 gifts, including shirts and ties. One young man found a wedding ring. I don't know if it was ever put to use.

It's unimaginable that such a stunt would be attempted today. How many lawsuits would result? But this was acceptable then. History gives us glimpses of different values, expectations and acceptable risks.

**Editor's Note:** *Codling's* is featured in the museum's current exhibit on Royal Oak's centennial, which closes July 12, 2021.

**ALSO**  
There will be dropped from the air 10,000 merchandise coupons good for \$2.50 each in trade on any merchandise in our entire store.

**BESIDES**  
Other numerous articles of valuable merchandise will be dropped. Lucky persons will be the ones that see our Codling's store at 7 P.M. Saturday.

**Get a Watch FREE**  
Saturday Evening  
at 7:00 P. M.  
The Codling Corner Main at Third

**The JEWELRY STORE**  
**Codling's**  
MADE BY AMERICAN

## We Got Mail!

### Hello Royal Oak Historical Society.

On page seven of the May edition, there is a reference to a German Evangelical Lutheran Church at Lafayette and Sixth. Can you confirm this is accurate? According to the history of St. Paul's, it has been around since 1873 and was the first Lutheran church in Royal Oak. Wondering if the church at Lafayette and Sixth wasn't Lutheran?

Very cool job collecting images! We're doing the same at St. Paul as we approach our 150th anniversary. I'd be happy to share some images! (There are some articles I've found that say St. Paul was once the tallest building in Royal Oak, and you could see Belle Isle from the bell tower!)

Thanks!

Steven Carpenter  
Technology Coordinator/Communications Manager  
St. Paul Lutheran Church & School, Royal Oak

### Dear Editor,

Your Royal Oak Historical Society centennial newsletter edition (May 2021) arrived today. I always enjoy the newsletter, but this one is exceptional — an award winner. Special thanks to you and all the other volunteers who did the research and helped put this issue together. Congrats!

Donna and Ray Doyscher, Royal Oak

### Our response:

Dear Steve,

The German Evangelical Lutheran Church later became affiliated with the United Church of Christ and the congregation moved to Woodward and Normandy and is now Emmanuel Bethel Church. (I believe it was previously called Emmanuel Bethel Church of Christ.) I don't have the book I referenced in front of me, so I can't remember if the German population decreased or what the reason was for the change in affiliation. Could have been to do with the various Lutheran synods as well. I can check the dates as well.

I know St Paul's is old also! If you need any of the images of your church that we have, please let us know. Likewise, we'd love to have your historic images for our collection. I think we only have a picture of your oldest church, not the next one before your current building.

Thanks for touching base with us. We appreciate the interest!

Ellen Kehoe

*P.S. While attending a memorial service at Emmanuel Bethel Church recently, I spotted this cornerstone, which reveals an earlier name and a date close to that of St. Paul's.*



## Orson Starr House News

The Orson Starr House will reopen in September. Our first open house of the year will be Sunday, September 12 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Bring the whole family to our Civil War Day, Saturday, September 18 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tour the Orson Starr House, watch musket drills by uniformed reenactors and enjoy live period music.

This fall our ghost tours will also resume and can be scheduled by contacting Into The Afterlife Paranormal or the Orson Starr House Facebook pages.

The Orson Starr House is located at 3123 N. Main Street, one block south of Thirteen Mile Road. The house is owned by the city of Royal Oak. Additional parking is available two doors to the south at the Salvation Army Citadel. The house was occupied by the Starr Family for nearly 100 years and was home to one of Royal Oak's pioneering families. Open houses and tours are provided by the members of the Orson Starr House Guild, a volunteer committee that organizes special events at the monthly sessions. Admission is free to all events; however, donations are always welcome.

# Growing Up in Royal Oak Schools in the 1960s and '70s

By Winnie Drife Kowalski

I had the privilege to be a student in Royal Oak for my entire public school time. I started at Starr School (13 Mile and Crooks) in 1959 for kindergarten through sixth grade, Mary Lyons (13 Mile and Rochester Road) in 1966 and Kimball High School (now Royal Oak High School) in 1968. I graduated in 1972 ("We are great, better than you, we're the class of '72.")



School was very different in that time period. My kindergarten class with Mrs. Lau was half days. We learned colors, numbers and letters. There was no PBS, and children usually had mothers at home. It was more of a social time and was closer to the curriculum that preschool now covers.

Mrs. Shy, my first and second grade teacher, played the marimba. She taught us lots of songs. We learned phonics. I remember the cards displayed on a door that helped us learn how to sound out words. Mrs. Shy was the "Queen of Field Trips." We visited Belle Isle (including the zoo and a submarine tour), the Ford Rotunda (it burned down not long after our visit), the Detroit Zoo, Velvet Peanut Butter factory, Vernor's and other places. It was quite an education. Many of those places no longer allow the public to tour.

I lived about three houses short of the required distance to stay at school for lunch, so I walked home for lunch every day. We had crossing guards (sixth graders) and adults to help us cross Crooks and 13 Mile for lunch and before and after school.

Schools performed other functions in those times. We stood in line and received our sugar cubes that contained polio vaccines. We had a general eye test done there. For a few extra dollars, you got a fluoride treatment as there was no fluoride in the water yet. They swabbed the fluoride on your teeth with long cotton swabs. The fluoride tasted terrible but helped with cavities. Few people had dental insurance. We also got tuberculosis tests. Everyone got the little skin prick, and then we went again a few days later and had the test read. All of these events took place in the gym.

We still had our share of discipline problems in those times, but they were handled differently than today. My sixth grade teacher, Mr. John Tremain, would not be considered politically correct these days. He had a wooden paddle on his wall and was the school disciplinarian. He was smart and kind-hearted but didn't tolerate bad behavior. Yes, he used his paddle on students.

Mr. Tremain was also the head of the safety patrol and service squads. Guys in sixth grade could be on safety patrol; they helped the crossing guards or helped students cross streets near the building. Service squads were made up of sixth grade girls who helped teachers as students arrived before school or during lunch hour. There was a code of conduct to follow for both positions. Working in my second grade teacher's room, I could now stay for lunch. We paid 1 cent for white milk and 2

cents for chocolate. Everyone ate in the gym and then went outside to assigned playgrounds unless the weather was bad. Bad weather meant the rest of lunch took place in the classrooms.

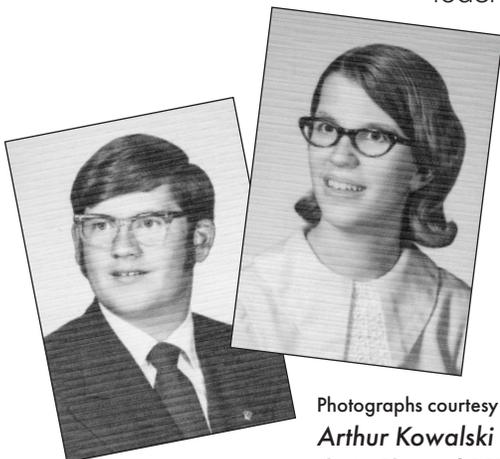
Emergency drills were big. We did fire drills that are very similar to the fire drills of today. We also did tornado drills during which everyone went out into the hall. For air raid drills, we hid under a desk to protect ourselves from nuclear bombs – I was never quite sure how hiding under a desk would protect us from nuclear attack!

Schools didn't have air conditioning. Near the end of eighth grade, we were studying World War II, so the entire eighth grade watched *The Guns of Navarone*, a two-and-a-half hour movie, in the gym, where it was more than 100 degrees.



Photograph courtesy of Winnie Drife Kowalski

**Winnie Drife's second grade class visiting Belle Isle in June 1962.**



Photographs courtesy of Winnie Drife Kowalski  
**Arthur Kowalski and Winnie Drife in their Class of 1972 senior pictures.**

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Movies were on big reels for movie projectors and were displayed on a screen or wall, after they had been released for a number of years (like *The Guns of Navarone*) or you went to the movie theater. There were not any movie rating systems. In ninth grade English, we studied *Romeo and Juliet*. A new movie, *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Franco Zeffirelli, came out in 1968. The teachers decided to take us to see the movie. It turned out to be a big hit with the teenage boys, as Olivia Hussey was topless in one of the scenes. It caught the teachers completely off-guard, and I'm sure the school heard from a number of parents. Ratings came out not long after, and this movie may have been one of the reasons!



Photograph courtesy of Winnie Drife Kowalski

**Kimball High School marching band in the early 1970s.**

One thing that must be understood is that girls were viewed differently than boys at this time. The dress code dictated that girls had to wear skirts or dresses to school each day that were no more than an inch above the knee. In my senior year, we finally had a few Fridays when girls could wear pants on a trial basis. After we graduated in 1972, they changed the rules permanently. French Club held a "Sadie Hawkins" dance each February — girl ask guy. Our senior year, I asked two fellows (who both said no to me). The second one recommended that I ask Art Kowalski. I did, and he said "yes." The second guy stood up in our wedding. As of August 2021, we will celebrate our 45th wedding anniversary. It is funny how things work out.

My husband was part of the marching band. One time, they practiced on Lexington Boulevard to learn how to march in straight lines for a parade. Mr. Patrick Pugh told them to "Stay in your lines. Don't move for anything or anyone." They started to practice and came to some cars. When the first students on the far right (trombones) started to climb on the parked car in their way, Mr. Pugh stopped them but started to laugh as they were doing exactly as he had instructed.

The start of our senior year meant senior pictures. The experience was very different in those days. There was one photography studio — Bill Williams in downtown Royal Oak. Guys wore a sport coat and a tie. Gals wore a dress or skirt. You went to their studio. My husband showed up for his photo session and was told he could not have a mustache. He had to go in their bathroom and shave it off before they would take his picture. I do not ever recall another time when he did not have a mustache. He grew it back immediately after the session.

**Editor's Note:** Winnie (Drife) Kowalski grew up in Royal Oak. She and her four younger siblings (Marie, David, Donald and Carl) attended Starr School, Mary Lyons and Kimball. She graduated from Kimball in 1972, Concordia College (associate's degree) and Oakland University with a teaching degree in mathematics. She married fellow Kimball and Oakland graduate, Arthur Kowalski, in 1976. They have two children and lived in Rockford, Illinois, before moving to Jenison, Michigan. She taught at Davenport College (Grand Rapids) and then did computer work for a small firm in Kentwood. She recently retired. Winnie and Art will celebrate their 45th anniversary in August.

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