



# ROYAL OAK Historical Society

FEBRUARY 2021 • ROYALOAKHISTORICALSOCIETY.COM

## Lessons Learned as a Paperboy for *The Daily Tribune*

by Leslie L. Haight

My dad started working at *The Daily Tribune* in 1945 as a linotype operator and worked there for 30 years. You had to be at least 11 years old to deliver the *Tribune*, so when I turned 11 in 1957, my dad took me down to "The Paper" to sign me up for my delivery route. With my inside connection, I got a nice route only about a half mile from our family home on North Vermont. I eventually built the route up to 88 customers on North Altadena and North Alexander between Red Run Park and 13 Mile Road.



My bundle of papers was dropped off on the corner of Parkdale and North Vermont about 3 o'clock every afternoon. I would carry them home and fold them for delivery while my mother ironed clothes and we watched *Who Do You Trust*, with its young comedic host at the time, Johnny Carson.

Mail carriers didn't have anything on us paperboys. Wind, rain, sleet, or snow, the newspaper had to be delivered. I remember one cold winter day when I warmed my hands under the tailpipe of a car that was left running in a customer's driveway. The two streets I had were lined

with neatly kept "story and a half houses." I delivered to almost every house on the two streets — for which I was paid 8 cents per customer per week Monday through Saturday. Those poor guys who delivered *The Detroit News*, the *Detroit Free Press*, or the *Detroit Times* had to work on Sundays too.

The *Tribune* cost 30 cents per week, and many times I heard, "You'll have to come back when my husband is home." The housewives either didn't have 30 cents in the house or weren't allowed to spend it without their husband's permission. My bill was due on Saturday mornings, so I started collecting on Thursdays. I didn't want to dip into my savings to pay my bill to the paper. If I collected from the hubby on Saturday, I might get a tip, but usually not. At Christmas time, the tips came rolling in — if you could catch the man of the house. If I were lucky, he would give me 50 cents and say, "Keep the change." A few generous guys would hand you a buck and say, "Merry Christmas." No paperboy gave up his route anywhere close to Christmas for obvious reasons.

On Saturday mornings, all the *Tribune* paperboys would gather at Fourth and Troy streets to pay their bills. It was a huge gathering, and everybody had their coins rolled in those paper cylinders with their names written on the roll, just in case you didn't count your change correctly. After I paid my bill, I was free to roam.

*Continued on Page 2*



Photograph courtesy of the Royal Oak Historical Society  
The Daily Tribune building on East Third Street in 1969



Photograph courtesy of Leslie L. Haight  
Tribune bag on display at the Museum

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*Historical Museum*

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covid-safety-rules

**Upcoming Exhibit**

Royal Oak's Centennial  
March 6 through July 17

## Lessons Learned as a Paperboy • Continued from Page 1

Downtown Royal Oak held many adventures. There were Kresge's, Neisner's Five and Dime, Montgomery "Monkey" Ward, and Cunningham's Drug Store, where you could get a cherry Coke for 6 cents and a bag of cheese corn (cheese curls or puffs) for a nickel. If you wanted to splurge, you could go to



Photograph courtesy of Leslie L. Haight  
**Leslie L. Haight at age 14 in 1960**

Brown's Creamery to get a chocolate ice cream cone for 13 cents.

The Detroit Zoo was free and just a short bike ride away. It was a great place to spend a hot Saturday with a Creamsicle running down your wrist while you waited to ride the diesel train the whole length of the zoo for just a dime.

I had my own attractions; my aunt owned the Spark's Music Store on Sixth Street, where I could strum a new Gibson guitar or listen to the latest Elvis Presley 45 rpm record. Just a few blocks away, my grandmother had a big house on

the corner of Hudson and Main. I loved that house. It was a four-square with beautiful oak woodwork and a wrap-around porch that faced both streets. My mother said that before Main Street was paved, motorcars would get stuck in the sand in front of their house. Potter Moving and Storage bought the house in the mid-1960s, tore it down, and it has been a parking lot ever since.

When I turned 16, I gave up my route, as no guy with a driver's license would be caught dead delivering papers. I found a job delivering prescriptions, using my car and gas, for 75 cents an hour. I surely had hit the big time. I had a car, gas money, got off work at 10 p.m., and could cruise the Big Boy on Woodward until 11:50 p.m. I needed 10 minutes to get home before midnight.



Photograph courtesy of Leslie L. Haight  
**Grandma Bowman's house at 1003 S. Main, circa 1917**

Later in life when my job required me to hire employees, I would always ask if they had been a paperboy. Paperboys know the value of a buck and that the customer is always right. Fond memories and valuable lessons learned.

*Leslie L. Haight grew up in Royal Oak in two houses his parents built, one at 515 S. Connecticut and one at 2445 N. Vermont. He attended Grant Elementary, Lockman Elementary, Mary Lyon Junior High, and graduated from Kimball High School in 1964.*

*At the urging of his high school auto shop instructor, Bill Jusela, Leslie attended the University of Wisconsin-Stout in Menomonie, majoring in industrial education. He taught high school auto shop in Clarkston and eventually moved into the automotive industry. He worked in automotive technician training at Chrysler, Creative Universal, MascoTech, and Volkswagen of America. He retired in 2008 and now lives in the historic district of Clarkston.*

## Sophie Bowman: Career Woman, First Woman Historical Society President

Leslie Haight is the nephew of Sophie Virginia Bowman, who in 1957 was the first woman elected president of the Royal Oak Historical Society. Every year, the Society honors a female volunteer in her name.



**Sophie Virginia Bowman  
Sweezy around 1957**

Bowman was born on a farm at 14 Mile Road and Main Street in what is now Clawson. The family moved to downtown Royal Oak in 1917. Sophie graduated from St. Mary's High School and went to work for the Michigan State Telephone Co. in 1918. By 1920, she was the chief operator. The company later became the Michigan Bell Telephone Co., and Sophie had a 43-year career there.

In 1947, she organized the "Hello Girls of 1920." In 1947, she moved into the business office and eventually became supervisor. In 1953, she took a special assignment coordinating Michigan Bell Telephone's "Telezonica" program that taught elementary school students around the state the proper methods of using the telephone.

Sophie was married in 1957 to Garnet Sweezy, former manager of the Michigan Bell Telephone office in Royal Oak.

Besides her involvement with the Historical Society, Sophie was a past president of the Royal Oak Soroptimist Club, member of the Telephone Pioneers of America, a director of the Friends of the Library, and a member of St. Mary's Sodality. She is buried in St. Mary's Cemetery.



Both photographs courtesy of Leslie L. Haight  
**Sophie Virginia Bowman with a Model T Ford and a puppy in 1921 at age 18.**

## Curator's Corner

BY MURIEL VERSAGI

### Royal Oak Becomes a City — Our First 40 Years of Growth from Sapling to Shade Tree

The Museum's exhibit celebrating the 100th anniversary of Royal Oak becoming an official city will be a wonderful stroll through the city's history from 1921 through the 1950s.

Our amazing volunteer exhibit display curator, Johanna Schurrer, is putting together — along with volunteers Lee Potter, Lindsay Zaremski, Ellen Kehoe, Joanna Becker, Libby Walker, and me — a truly remarkable exhibit.

We will have historic documents, booklets, and photographs of downtown and the housing subdivisions as they grew. We'll see photos of the schools as they were built, graduating classes, artifacts of life in the different eras, and so much more. You won't want to miss this one!

Opening day will be March 6, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. As always, there is no cost, but we do ask that you make a donation if you think the exhibit is as wonderful as we do.

The exhibit will run until the end of July when we get ready for our annual August Car Show.



Photograph courtesy of the Royal Oak Historical Society  
**City employees in May 1937**

# President's Message

BY BOB MULLER

## Royal Oak's Centennial 1921 — 2021

On June 21, 1921, the City of Royal Oak was incorporated, so this year we celebrate our 100th birthday. Beginning in early March, the Royal Oak Historical Museum will open its display telling that story:

### **"Royal Oak Becomes a City — Our First 40 Years of Growth from Sapling to Shade Tree"**

In 1821, Alexander Campbell took up land in the southeast corner of Section 9 (Main and 12 Mile). Alexander and his wife in 1821 built a log house and soon added a barn in the northwest corner of Section 8 (13 Mile and Coolidge). This is the beginning of people living here.

It was stated in a booklet for the centennial celebration of Royal Oak Township that the first 100 years were "the transformation of swamps and sand ridges to fertile farmlands" and the second 100 years would change it from "farm lands to city lots." This is exactly what happened, and no one alive today remembers Royal Oak not looking very similar to how it looks now.

There are several books on Royal Oak history:

- *Royal Oak, Michigan: The Early Years* by Owen Perkins
- *Royal Oak, Our Living Legend* by Constance Kingan Crossman
- *Royal Oak: Twigs and Acorns* by David Penney and Lois Lance



Photograph courtesy of the Royal Oak Historical Society  
***Downtown Royal Oak in the early 1920s***

These books have many remembrances from people up to about 1940. Some people may still personally remember the 1940s, but that group is getting smaller.

Another book, *Images of America: Royal Oak*, by John S. Schultz, a historical society board member, and Maureen McDonald, is filled with historical photographs and chronicles the history and growth of the city.

A remembrance from when I was in high school in the mid-1960s is that downtown Royal Oak was where we went to shop; it had at least five shoe stores and a lot of men's and women's clothing stores. By the 1970s, the growth of shopping malls had caused many downtown stores to close; it was nearly a ghost town. When the construction of I-696 was completed in December 1989, downtown Royal Oak became within a 30-minute drive from anywhere in metro Detroit, and an explosion of restaurants occurred. A building boom then followed.

*Do you have a story or fond memory about growing up here? What was the city like after WWII? What was work or school like? We'd love this day-to-day history for the museum collection and our website — to tell our story for historians 100 years from now.*

*We will help you polish your prose! You can send your contributions to our newsletter editor, Trish Oliver, at [patriciaanneoliver@gmail.com](mailto:patriciaanneoliver@gmail.com).*

# 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).

## Radabaugh House

609 Catalpa Drive

Tudor Revival Built in 1931

Nathan Valentine, who was 36-years old at the time, built this Tudor house in 1931 of brick and wood on a lot and a half in the Osgood Subdivision. Nathan and his wife, Artina E. Valentine, lived in the home for more than 50 years. The family's three children attended Dondero High School. As of 2006, the home was owned by Genevieve Radabaugh.

The exterior of this house has several unusual details that add to the uniqueness and charm, beginning with the main roofline that gently curves upward at each end gable. The smaller gable that rises above the entry has peaks that rise like small spires, adding an additional element of graceful height to the house.

Both the first and second floors have 16 paned steel-cased windows whose central sections swing outward. And the upper front window has

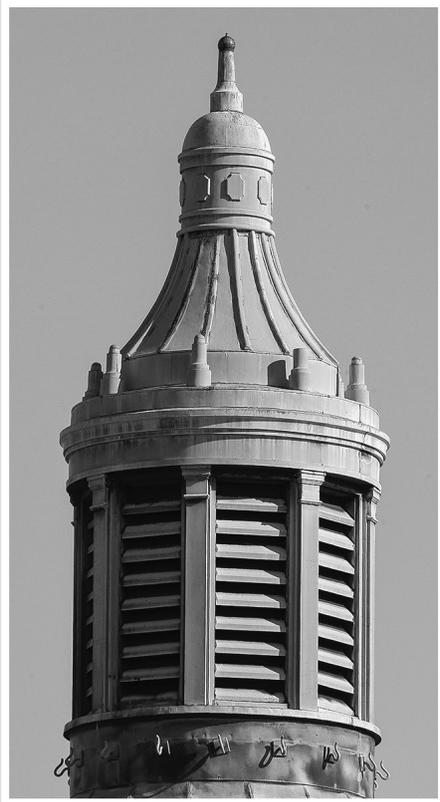
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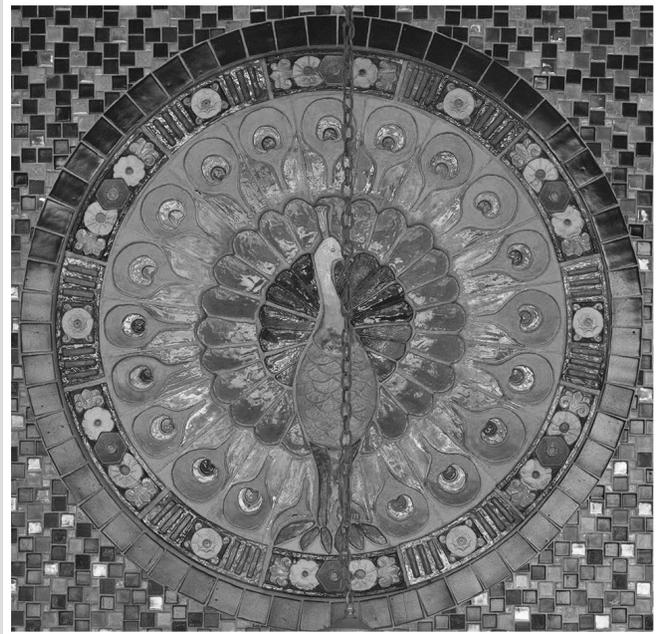
# PHOTO GAME

ALL THREE PHOTOS IN THIS PHOTO GAME ARE FROM THE SAME  
LANDMARK BUILDING IN ROYAL OAK.

HERE'S A HINT: IT'S NOT IN DOWNTOWN ROYAL OAK.



(a)



(b)



(c)

ANSWERS ON PAGE 11  
PHOTOS BY DON DRIFE

While Bob Muller usually takes the Photo Game photos, those for this edition were taken by Don Drife, who wrote the following booklets with Bob, which are for sale at the Museum and online:

- *Growth of the Village and City of Royal Oak*
- *Indian Trails through Royal Oak Township*
- *The Interurban*
- *The History of a Piece of Land* (additional co-author: Theodore G. Vickers)

Don is also the botanist for the Royal Oak Nature Society and has written a book about wildflowers.

# Royal Oak Then & Now

BY JOHN MAURICE, ROHS FACEBOOK EDITOR



Then  
1960s



Photographs courtesy of the  
Royal Oak Historical Society

The building at 2560 Crooks has served the Northwood subdivisions for more than 65 years in one capacity or another. Built in 1955, it was a grocery store in its original capacity — for many years the home of a Great Scott! store.

I remember going there with my mother when I was still small enough to ride in the shopping cart. Sav-On Drugs was attached and served as a neighborhood pharmacy — one where you could obtain truly personal service if there was an illness in the family. Also, you could buy baseball cards, gum, magazines, comic books, candy, and other odds and ends. If you grew up in the Webster and Crooks area, chances are that you spent a lot of time in Sav-On as a youth. Those among us who are older would remember it as Barney's.

When Great Scott! closed after the acquisition of the chain by Kroger in 1990, the building continued its life as a grocery store but was now known as Oak Ridge Market. As a true neighborhood grocery store, not only would there be a strong chance that you would bump into someone you knew while you were shopping, but Oak Ridge also provided jobs to many Royal Oak youths as baggers or cashiers.

Although Oak Ridge continues to operate two markets in the area, the Royal Oak location shut down and changed hands in 2013, followed by a short existence as Northwood Market. Its days as a grocery store were over, but after an extensive renovation and a small addition, the property reopened in 2017 as a Planet Fitness. Gone were the acoustical tile ceiling and tile floors; in their place you will find a wide-open space with great exposed wood beams supporting the roof structure. Where once you would find bananas, milk, and cereal, today treadmills, ellipticals, and weight machines define the building that spent so many years as a neighborhood grocery store.



Then  
1990s

Although Oak Ridge continues to operate two markets in the area, the Royal Oak location shut down and changed hands in 2013, followed by a short existence as Northwood Market. Its days as a grocery store were over, but after an extensive renovation and a small addition, the property reopened in 2017 as a Planet Fitness. Gone were the acoustical tile ceiling and tile floors; in their place you will find a wide-open space with great exposed wood beams supporting the roof structure. Where once you would find bananas, milk, and cereal, today treadmills, ellipticals, and weight machines define the building that spent so many years as a neighborhood grocery store.



Now

Photograph courtesy of Google Maps

# Looking Back

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

## What was happening in Royal Oak in February – March:

### 60 years ago — 1961

Vandalism at Jane Addams Junior High School has caused Principal Bruce Feighner to cancel a school dance scheduled for tonight (Feb. 24). Feighner said the "final straw" was the defacement Thursday afternoon of a recently purchased picture of Jane Addams for whom the school was named.

The picture was part of the centennial in Detroit last year honoring Jane Addams. It was purchased from Mrs. Kathleen Lowery of Birmingham who was Miss Addams' personal secretary. "I cancelled the dance to point out that all have to suffer for the actions of a few," Feighner said.

\* \* \*

Royal Oak DPW, Water and Parks and Grounds employees have asked for a 15-cent-per-hour pay raise in the 1961-62 budget. This amounts roughly to a seven percent hike. Royal Oak policemen have already asked a 10 percent hike



Photograph by The Daily Tribune

### 1951: Stuck in the Mud on Berkshire

*With mud up to its hubcaps, this car presents a common sight on Berkshire Road east of Woodward Avenue. Its driver made the mistake of steering to the south side of Berkshire where a gas pipeline was installed in January, leaving soft, settling earth. Neighborhood residents Arthur Gross, left, and Ernest R. Fleming, start what has become a routine digging-out process.*

Spring fever has caught up with residents on Berkshire road in Royal Oak.

But it's not the kind of spring fever most people get. This variety is virulent. It makes residents angry. It makes them grab shovels and rakes and use them hour after hour on the road in front of their homes. It makes them rent a Jeep with a road-grading blade mounted on its front and use it to fill in ruts, holes and soft spots in their road. It makes them appear before the Royal Oak city commission with complaints.

And all because they are unwilling to park their cars on Woodward Avenue or 14 Mile road and walk home. Berkshire road is going through the rites of spring — soft muck that traps cars. The usual spring thaw is enough to send most any resident living on a dirt street into a fever, but Berkshire residents have other reasons.

The biggest other reason is a gas pipeline installed on their street shortly after Christmas. Berkshire residents, particularly those in the block east of Woodward, don't like the pipeline after the H.L. Gentry company of Utica first excavated for it in January.

A huge cement crusher was used to break up the frozen earth and several residents reported cracked plaster, broken sewer and water connections and other damage to homes on the street from earth shocks.

Continued on Page 9

## Looking Back • Continued from Page 8

for themselves. Other demands of the union are for longevity pay, severance pay and full city-paid hospitalization for employees and their families.

\* \* \*

Eugene R. Shumbaugh has been promoted to Divisional Merchandise Manager of intimate apparel at J.L. Hudson Company. He was formerly the Assistant Divisional Manager of fashion accessories. He lives at 1309 Northwood.

\* \* \*

### 70 years ago — 1951

The 37-year-old Royal Oak junior high school has a new name as of today.

The new pupils there and graduates of the school at the senior high chose Clara Barton as the school's new name.

Oak Ridge junior high is getting a new title too, after its pupils vote next week. (It became Mary Lyon Junior High). The combined student bodies of the two junior highs and high school will pool their second-place choices as the name of a new Northwood junior high to be built soon.

The choosing of the new name for the two buildings and the third planned building is being done to eliminate confusion.

The Royal Oak junior high pupils and alumni chose the name of the woman who established the Red Cross in America for their school.

\* \* \*

About 3,000 dogs are running loose in South Oakland County, giving police one of the worst spring headaches in years. In several cities, as high as 50 percent of all calls taken by police concern dogs. Complaints include biting, destruction of shrubbery, tipping over garbage cans and barking.

Robert Hall, Royal Oak dog warden, said that he gets an average of 3,000 to 4,000 calls a year on dogs, resulting in 1,500 to 2,000 pickups. The majority of all dogs are destroyed, but all dogs are kept a minimum of three days while owners are notified. Hall will soon get an assistant and would like a system that would empower him to issue summons to owners whose dogs are frequent offenders. He has said he has repeated complaints on some dogs, which run loose until he chases them home. The next day, he said, the same thing starts all over again.

\* \* \*

### 75 years ago — 1946

A surplus BT-13 training plane, equipped with a 425 horsepower radial Wasp engine, has been purchased by Royal Oak High School for instructional purposes. The plane, whose original cost is cataloged at \$50,000, sold for \$100.

According to Supt. N.J. Quickstad, aeronautical courses will again be offered at the high school, perhaps in the fall term. Former aero instructor, Donald Bray, now in the Naval Air Corps, is expected back at the high school March 1, Quickstad said.

\* \* \*

A 50-percent increase in land assessments in Royal Oak, designed to boost the city's revenue by \$60,000, was forecasted by City Assessor Alger Zapf.

\* \* \*

City attorney William C. Hudson declared that, in his opinion, Royal Oak's city charter was sufficient to allow for financing paving and sewer construction programs by special assessment.

\* \* \*

Membership in secret fraternities or sororities has been forbidden for Royal Oak high school students.

\* \* \*

### 80 years ago — 1941

Stanton G. Dondero, elder son of Congressman and Mrs. George A. Dondero of Royal Oak, has been appointed a deputy county clerk by County Clerk Lynn D. Allen and assigned to Judge George B. Hartrick's division of Circuit Court.

\* \* \*

*Continued on Page 10*

# Online Photo Exhibit

By Karen Turk, ROHS Board member and museum volunteer



The Royal Oak Historical Society has been working to share a selection of its historical photographs at <https://royaloakhistory.omeka.net/>. The Society presents these photographs for fair use purposes such as teaching, research, and private study.

Most of the images are from the early 1900s, but some are from as far back as the mid-1800s. The online collection includes this photo, which was donated as part of the Owen Perkins estate. It shows a snowy scene from downtown Royal Oak on May 9, 1923.

The buildings and cars are covered in snow, and the street is visibly wet due to an unseasonable snowfall of six inches that occurred that day.

More photographs will be added as time allows, but history lovers can always view our server for images during regular museum hours.

Photograph courtesy of the Royal Oak Historical Society

*A snowy scene on Main Street in downtown Royal Oak on May 9, 1923.*

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## Looking Back • Continued from Page 9

### 90 years ago — 1931

The Royal Oak City School System is prepared to train machinists for the national defense construction program as soon as Federal contracts are ready, instructors are employed and trainees are assigned.

\* \* \*

George L. Brewbaker, principal of the Royal Oak Junior High School, was transferred to be principal of Oak Ridge, and A.H. Upton, principal of Oak Ridge, was transferred to the Junior High by the board of education and Supt. Frank Hendry.

\* \* \*

### 100 years ago — 1921

The Royal Oak post office celebrated its first year as a Detroit branch, classified as a "two-by-four" village by postal authorities. Royal Oak has one of the most modern and complete postal stations in the country under Supt. G.E. Trombley.

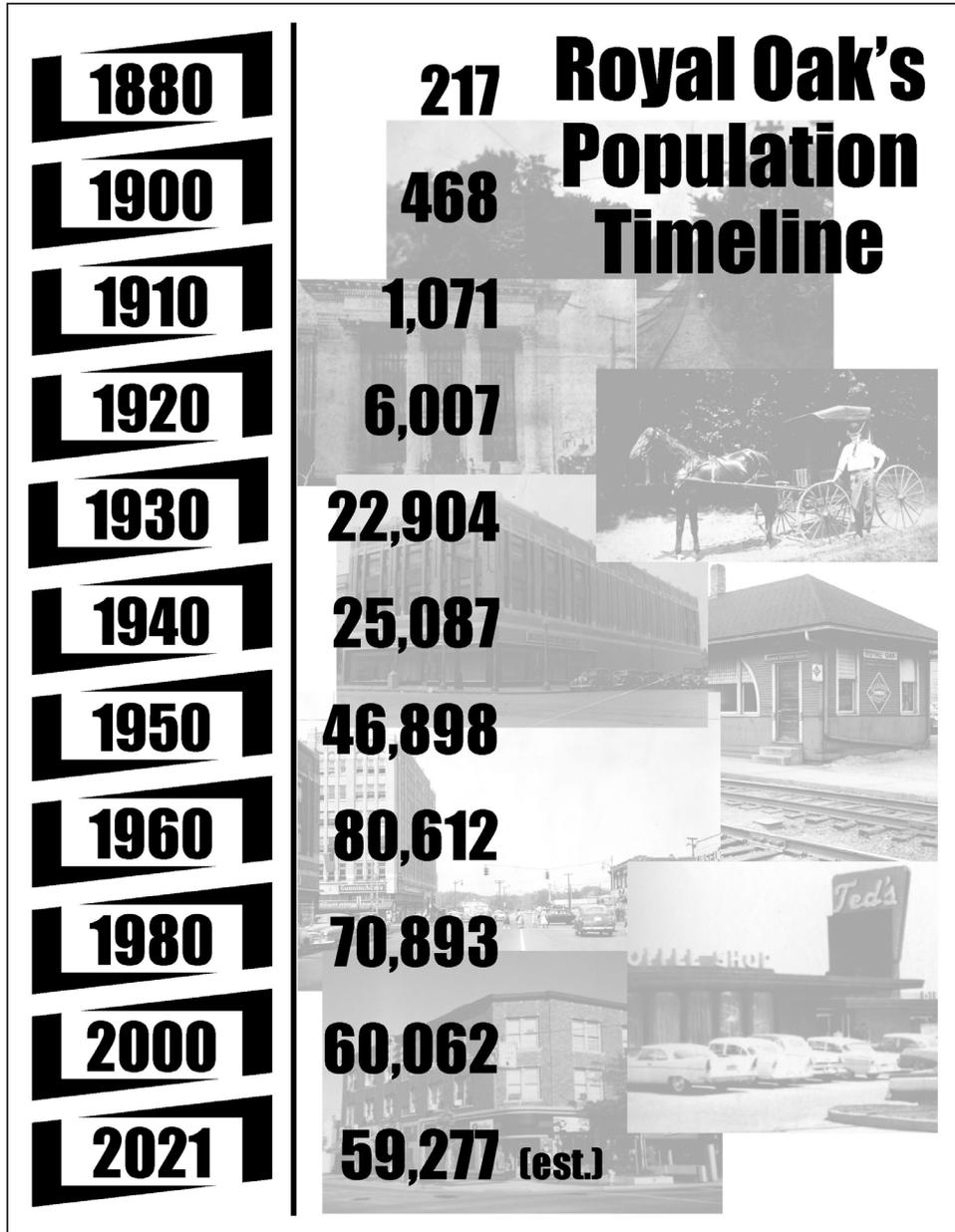
When Francis J. Heavener was postmaster, only three villages and three rural carriers were allowed at the local office. Now, Royal Oak Village is served by seven carriers, Ferndale by four, Pleasant Ridge by one and the West Twelve Mile community and Vinsetta park by one. In addition, three rural carriers are serving the outlying districts. Three thousand feet of floor space is available in the new offices at Fourth and Williams.

\* \* \*

William Forster & Son has opened a store at 125 South Main that they have stocked with a complete line of poultry feeds and regulators. (The location is where the former Royal Oak Andiamo restaurant stood).



Photographs courtesy of the  
 Royal Oak Historical Society  
 Data source: U.S. Census  
 Graphic by Mike Frenz



### Radabaugh House • Continued from Page 5

a small, iron faux balcony. The heavy, wooden arched front door has a round, stained glass window at the top and back and iron strap hinges across the center and bottom.

Three steps rise to a large concrete pad surrounded by an iron rail at the front of the house, and the entry is offset to one end but balanced at the other end by the brick fireplace chimney that is decorated with four equilaterally placed masonry blocks and centered with one larger heraldic block.

The interior has three bedrooms and two bathrooms. The ceiling height throughout is eight and a half feet. In the intervening years, remodeling has been done to both the second story and to the kitchen. The living room and dining room have coved ceilings without moldings.

The fireplace is all brick and provided an anchor for the comfortable arrangement of furnishings in the living room. The rooms are large and filled with light from the westerly side since the house is situated on property having more space than a single lot. Its classic style and interior layout make it ideal as a family home.

All three photos were taken at the Matilda R. Wilson Free Flight Aviary (aka The Bird House) at the Detroit Zoo.

PHOTO GAME ANSWERS:



ROYAL OAK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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ROYAL OAK  
*Historical Society*

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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Individual: \$20 \_\_\_\_ Family: \$30 \_\_\_\_ Supporter: \$50 \_\_\_\_  
Century: \$100 \_\_\_\_ Club: \$200 \_\_\_\_ Premium: \$300 \_\_\_\_ Benefactor: \$500 \_\_\_\_

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