

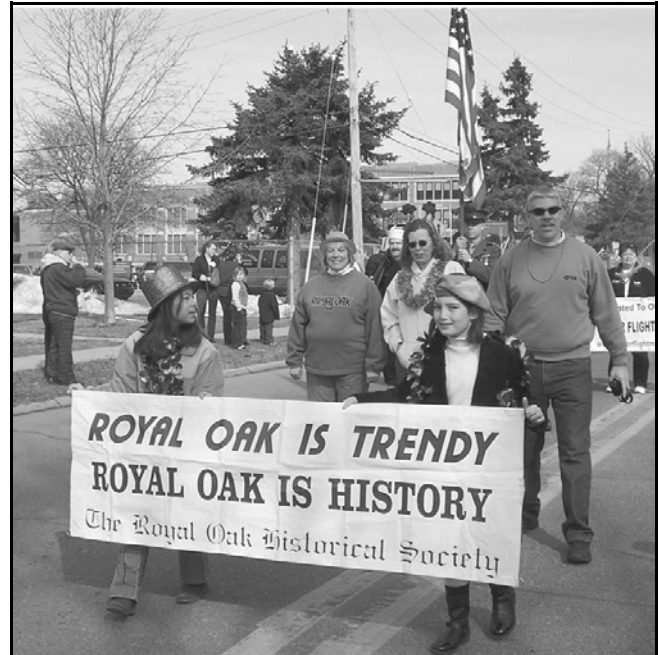


Royal Oak Historical Society Spring 2008

www.royaloakhistoricalsociety.com

Top of the morning!

The Royal Oak Historical Society marched in Royal Oak's St. Patrick's Day Parade. Miyo Fukuzawa and Clare Oliver DiPaola carry the ROHS banner. Behind them are board members Patty Dunstan, Karrie Mahrle and Board President Jay Dunstan. *(Photo by Bill Sullivan)*



Message from the president

Pancake breakfast coming up on Memorial Day

By JAY DUNSTAN,
Historical Society President

Dear Members,

I wanted to remind everyone that once again we'll be hosting the Memorial Day Pancake Breakfast at the Farmers Market on Monday, May 26. The breakfast will run from 7 a.m. until noon. Prices are \$6 for adults and \$3 for children 10 and under. Please plan on stopping by either before or after the parade. We'd like to thank in advance our two major sponsors for the event — the Farmers Market and Holiday Market. If you'd like to volunteer to work with us that day, please contact either Phil or Marge Smith (248-547-8967). This is also the Historical Society's biggest fundraiser,

so your support is greatly appreciated. This year, the parade returns to Main Street.

I am also pleased to announce that we've procured a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) in the amount of \$132,700. With great help from Mardy Stirling in Royal Oak's Planning Department as well as Architect and Royal Oak Historical Commission member Mark Farlow, we'll be able to make the necessary improvements for our move into the Fire Hall. These improvements include making the main floor bathroom ADA-compliant, adding barrier-free ramps to both main floor doors and adding an elevator.

(Continued on Page 2)

Coming up! The Royal Oak Woman's Club Home Tour June 28, 2008

Featuring 9 locations including Fx Architecture on East Fifth, the penthouse loft at The Fifth on Washington Avenue, WPA murals at Royal Oak Middle School and 6 other homes.

Many docents are needed. Volunteer for a three-hour shift and get a free tour.

For information, call Sandy Wilkins 248-894-6441 or Pam Maser 248-541-8624.

ROYAL OAK IMAGES Yesterday's Charm Today's Treasures Second Printing Now Available

Royal Oak Images Yesterday's Charm Today's Treasures, a book illustrating the diversity of architecture and street-scapes within the City of Royal Oak from Historic to Contemporary, is in its second printing. Published by the Roundtable of Royal Oak Historical Organizations — a standing committee of the Royal Oak Historical Commission — the book recently received a State History Award from the Historical Society of Michigan.

A limited number of copies are available for \$30 at:

- Frentz & Son's Hardware, 1010 N. Main.

- Ladybug Craft Shoppe, 210 W. Sixth St.
 - Miner's Den, 3417 Rochester Rd.
 - The Royal Oak Historical Society Museum at Churchill Community Education Center, 707 Girard St., east of Rochester and ½ mile north of 12 Mile. (Best entrance to the north parking lot is from DeVillen Rd. east off of Rochester Rd. or take N. Alexander, south off of 13 Mile Rd. Enter through the double doors in the middle of the building.)
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Message from the president

(Continued from Page 1)

Mark is working on supplying comprehensive drawings of these improvements to the city. CDBG monies are not released until after July 1, so no construction can begin until after that date. I would also like to personally thank Don Moonen for his work in re-keying the Fire Hall and Chuck Button for refinishing the floors on the upper level.

2008 has already been a very busy year for the Royal Oak Historical Society. We've co-hosted the Swing Dance with the Royal Oak School District's WPA Murals Restoration Committee, held two Town Hall Meetings, and helped Jim Craft and the Oakland County Historical Commission host a workshop entitled "Bringing Local History to the Classroom." Thank you to Hollywood Super Market for the \$50 donation towards the breakfast served at the workshop.

We plan on having another Swing Dance in 2009 and starting a new series of Town Hall Meetings in the autumn of 2008. Also on the horizon is a Corn Roast Saturday, August 9, at the Farmers Market. Unlike pre-

vious years, this will be part of a bigger event that day called "The County Fair." Besides roasted corn, there will be a moonwalk, performances by local bands, a chocolate chip cookie contest as well as handcrafts and art. There will also be a dunk tank, so you'll be given the opportunity to put local celebrities in the drink. The event will be held in the west lot of the market from 10 a.m. until 7 p.m. Regular market hours (7 a.m. until 1 p.m.) will also be in effect that day.

I want to thank all of you for your continued support of the Historical Society. Our success rests in your hands in the shape of donations and your volunteerism. I also want to thank the hardworking board members. They have put in many hours, so that all of us can continue to appreciate Royal Oak's heritage.

Lastly I'd like to offer our thoughts and prayers for Tom Wurdock and his family. Tom was in Beaumont Hospital for several weeks and is continuing his recovery at home. While visitors are limited, cards and well wishes are welcome. We hope he gets well real soon. The Historical Society is not the same organization without Tom. We look forward to his return.

My best to all of you,
Jay Dunstan

Flint Faience Tile
Town Hall Talk
Follow-Up

On March 12, Flint Faience Tile A to Z co-author Ken Galvas spoke to about fifty people and outlined the interesting history of the Flint Faience Tile Company — Michigan’s other historic tile company during the Arts and Crafts Movement of the 1920s. Here are some comments from attendees to give those of you who were unable to attend a taste of the talk:



The Flint Faience tile in Marcia Pilliciotti’s Boston-Edison home was one of the things that had her fall in love with her home and also inspired her to attend the Royal Oak Historical Society’s Town Hall talk featuring author and speaker Ken Galvas about Flint Faience tile.

“As a member of the Tile Heritage Foundation, I used to attend symposiums all over the country and listen to speakers who were interested in preserving historic tile. I think it’s really interesting that we have this incredible historic tile that was produced right here in neighboring Flint. I also thought that the Flint Faience Tile Company’s tie-in with a car company was very interesting. Basically, the refractory material within the tunnel kiln cracks and needs to be repaired if the kiln stops production. In order to avoid the need for continual repair, the AC Sparkplug Company (later bought by GM) invented the Flint Faience Tile Company so that the kilns in which they made the ceramic parts for sparkplugs were utilized 24 hours a day. So, this beautiful, artistic tile came to be out of a very practical need.”

*Laurie Eisenhardt
 Royal Oak Ceramic Artisan*

“Both Laurie (Eisenhardt) and I belong to the Tile Heritage Foundation. We found out about Flint Faience tiles years ago by going to dif-

ferent author talks around the country. It’s so nice to have had the historic Flint Faience Company right in our own back yard. I knew about the Flint Faience tile fireplaces and drinking fountains at Northwood and Longfellow and had the hope that they would be installed in their respective new schools because they’re so historic. Since I make tiles, I thought this Town Hall Talk was really interesting. I’m glad the talk had a good turnout; it’s always nice to see people come out for these kinds of things.”

*Marcia Hovland
 Royal Oak Ceramic Artisan
 Marcia Hovland Studio Gallery
 415 E. Fourth Street*

“Many years ago, I bought a house on Atkinson Street in Detroit, for \$8,000. Even for a house that was built in 1903, it was in bad shape, with dozens of broken windows, a leaky roof, full of garbage and suffering from a fire and loot-

ers. The two sparkling gems that made me throw caution to the wind and fall in love were the beautiful old stove on claw feet and the lovely gold and green tile fireplace. I found an extra tile in the attic. The back was stamped “Flint Faience Tile Co. Mich.” I am next to the Historic Boston Edison Neighborhood where most people only know Pewabic tiles. I was thrilled when a calendar of historic events was emailed to me and listed the Royal Oak Historical Society lecture on Flint Faience tile. It was great! I learned so much of the company’s history, and loved the many examples and slides. I also found out the tile was added later to the home (maybe in the 1920s) and came away with a new respect for my beautiful fireplace.”

*Marcia Pilliciotti
 Boston-Edison District
 Detroit*

(Continued on Page 4)

Donations to the Royal Oak Historical Society are gratefully accepted

Send checks payable to:
The Royal Oak Historical Society
c/o Churchill Community Education Center
707 Girard, Royal Oak, MI 48073
Donations are tax-deductible.
Thank you in advance.

Wine Bottles Needed!

By Gloria Moran Harper

You don't have to do anything but "drink wine"! For a ROHS upcoming project, thirty wine bottles are needed by July 8th — the 1.5-liter size in any color. You may drop them off at the home of Gloria Moran Harper at 3321 N. Main Street, just one house north of the 7-11 Party Store at Main and 13 Mile Road, or call Gloria at 248-435-9114 to arrange for the bottles to be picked up. Please put your name, address and phone number on the outside of the bag you put your bottles in. Thanks in advance for any help.

ORSON STARR HOUSE MUSEUM

The Orson Starr House Guild cares for the Michigan Farmhouse circa 1845 at 3123 N. Main Street, Royal Oak, one block south of 13 Mile Road. Additional parking one block south at Salvation Army Citadel. Info: 248-541-6141. Open House second Sundays monthly, 1-4 p.m.

Flint Faience Tile Town Hall Talk Follow-Up

(Continued from Page 3)

"Many Americans think, when it comes to old buildings, that we should just tear them down, throw them in landfill and build new ones. Old tile is just a wall covering. But in reality, tile is an art form that does not have the status of paintings, for instance. It takes someone like Ken to finally bring tile to the public. The Flint Faience Company is one of Michigan's great tilemakers that is no longer around. Their tiles cannot be manufactured anymore in the way they were made. Any that are found need to be saved. Technology has made it easier to save these pieces of history."

*Larry Mobley
Tile Preservationist*

"After attending the talk, I bought Ken Galvas (and co-author Margaret Carney's) book Flint Faience Tile A to Z. Afterwards, I followed up with the owners of the Fort Shelby Hotel that is currently being renovated in downtown Detroit, and they are now aware that they have historic Flint Faience tile in the basement. In 1995, I used to live in the Al-Dor Manor at the north-west corner of Sixth & Washington. There was a fabulous Flint Faience tile floor-to-ceiling "dolphin" fountain in the foyer. Melanie Basil, then archivist at Pewabic Pottery, told me it wasn't Pewabic and identified it as Flint Faience. That was my first exposure to Flint Faience tile. I'm sorry that that fountain was demolished during its transformation into the Urbane Apartments."

*Rebecca Binno Savage
Vice President
Detroit Area Art Deco Society*



A



B



C

PHOTO GAME

Play the photo game. As Royal Oak Historical Society Board Member Bob Muller walks around town, he spots interesting architectural details with his keen eye and tries to stump you, Dear Reader. Can you identify which downtown Royal Oak buildings have these unique architectural details? (Answers can be found on Page 7.)

Royal Oak Historical Society Board Members

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Vinsetta Bridges: Rob Duchene and the Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee are investigating the history of the Vinsetta Bridges. Anyone with any knowledge or interesting anecdotes about the bridges should contact Rob at RRDuchene@yahoo.com or 248-549-6328. Rob is particularly interested in whether there ever were lights on the bridges and the exact date they were constructed.

**By Second Vice President
Tom Wurdock**

Mutt and Jeff

In the '30s and '40s and maybe before that, you could go to Kresge's dime store in early spring around Easter and buy live baby chicks that had been colored for the season. They would have a color on them you might use when you dyed eggs for Easter. They really did.

One Easter, I bought a couple of them for some reason. Like all living things, they started to grow up. It was kind of strange, but one was tall and thin, and the other one was short and fat. For that reason, the only name I could give them was "Mutt and Jeff" — inspired by the popular comic strip of the day featuring one tall and skinny man and one, you guessed it, short and fat. They both wore top hats and were always getting into trouble.

As Mutt and Jeff got older, they just hung around and lived in the chicken coop I had built in the back yard. In those days, there weren't too many fences, and South Maple was gravel. Well, I started letting them out and hoped they would stay in the back yard. Naturally, that didn't work. The only good thing is all our neighbors knew the chickens were mine, so they left them alone.

It got to be a regular routine — I would let them out in the afternoon, and they would roam the neighborhood but always come home. You could almost set your watch by them. At 5:30, they would be pecking and strolling their way up the driveway. This went on for most of the summer. They got bigger and met a lot of friendly neighbors. Neighbors would often ask me about my two feathered friends.

Naturally, something had to happen. It did one day when my mother got all dressed up to go up to town. She didn't drive then, but going downtown was not really a problem. You just walked up Fourth Street a few blocks, and you were in the middle of town. The Montgomery Ward building was on the southeast corner of Fourth and Washington. It took the entire frontage of Fourth Street between Lafayette and Washington. This was the major department store back then.

Across the street from Wards were the Royal Oak Theatre and Sanders Ice Cream. Sanders was a big store with a counter that ran around three sides of the store. There were swivel seats that allowed you to sit down and turn around and give your order. They had all forms of ice cream and light sandwiches. Tuna was good. Next to Sanders were other shops.

Around the corner on Washington from the front of Wards was Kresge's Five and Dime store, which is now Lily's Seafood. When you wandered into Kresge's, you were greeted with the most wonderful smell of freshly made doughnuts. They were made in their own doughnut machine — made automatically with no one touching them. The dough would spurt out of a spigot in the form of a ring and start floating in a river of hot oil. Halfway through the journey, they would automatically be turned over and cooked on the other side. At the end of the trip, they would be caught up on a chain rack and

dumped into a pile of sweet-smelling fresh doughnuts, waiting for someone to buy. Anyway, I digress ... I have to get back to Mutt and Jeff.

One day, my mother dressed up to do some shopping and maybe have lunch. She looked pretty classy when she got all dressed up with her fur scarf and all. Well, as she left the house and walked to the corner of Fourth and Maple, Mutt and Jeff spotted her. At this point in their lives, I think they thought they were dogs, and so they did the things that dogs do. They started to follow her uptown. They had never done this before but probably figured it would be all right to go with someone they knew. My mother didn't think so. She turned around about a block toward town and saw them casually walking down the street, following her.

Now, you can shoo a dog and they will usually turn and run. My mother, trying to maintain some dignity, quietly tried to shoo those chickens. It didn't work. After about three blocks up Fourth Street, she knew they thought this would be fun and a real adventure. She had no choice but to return home. She didn't want to be in the middle of town and have people ask, "Where did those chickens come from?" When I got home from school, I got the word they would have to go.

Well, old man Bytsoe lived behind us. He was raised on the farm and knew how to take care of chickens. I was curious and sad at the same time. It was a weird experience for me, especially when we had chicken for dinner that night. I was excused and ate a peanut butter and jelly sandwich instead...

Curator's Corner

By Muriel Versagi

An unknown visitor to the Museum dropped off the following two-page typescript. The pages were scanned to keep the document as much as possible in its original format — the only editing being to change to single-spaced lines. It would be great if one of our readers could identify the source of this interesting artifact.

“SELLING PAPERS”

During the mid-1940s, one way young boys had to make spending money was to be a “paper boy.” At that time, there were four newspapers in town — the Royal Oak Tribune, the Detroit News, the Detroit Times and the Detroit Free Press. The Tribune was a small paper, delivered locally six times a week. I think the cost for one week was 15 cents. A paper could usually be folded to a triangular shape and sailed from the boy's bike to the porch, unless the customer requested that it be placed between the doors. That would take extra time, of course, but we had to please the customer or get a complaint called in. That was not a pleasant thing to try to explain. Usually on Friday we began collecting from each customer for the number of papers we had delivered to them during the week. On Saturday we would have to pay the Tribune for the number of papers we had been given during the week. What we had left over was our pay. This was like running your own business so it was also a learning experience for all of us.

The News was the largest paper, but we could still usually fold it and throw it from our bikes, except on Thursday and Sunday. Then they were too large to

fold and remain folded if thrown, so we would have to hand-deliver each one to the porch. There were eight deliveries for the News during the week, six daily papers, a Saturday evening paper and the Sunday morning paper. I think the price for the dailies only was 24 cents and for all seven days was 36 cents. Collecting and paying for the papers was the same for all of the papers, so delivering the News or Times or Free Press was more profitable than the Tribune, except there were more Tribune customers, so it came out about the same. Weather had no impact on whether or not the paper was delivered. Rain, snow, sunshine or personal affairs did not interfere with our duties. I guess the Post Office slogan could apply to us as well. If we had to go on vacation with our families or were ill, we had to find a replacement to deliver for us. Usually doing that we would inform our customers that we would be gone and not to expect our superb service. Collecting was done after our return also, having made arrangements with the paper to hold our bill until we returned. There was usually a good working relationship within the delivery group.

The Free Press was an early morning paper. Some people wanted the paper before they left for work. Having to get up almost in the middle of the night to deliver wasn't popular with boys, so it was a lot harder to get a replacement if you were one of the regular delivery boys.

The Times was very similar to the News. Another way to earn money was to have a Saturday evening post where all of the Sunday papers were sold. The one I had was at a drugstore on the northeast corner of 4th Street and Main. I'm not sure, but I think it was a Cunningham Drugs. To attract customers for our wares we had a singsong type of chant that went “Get your News, Times, Free Press Paper!” We stayed there until the truck came to pick up all the unsold and satisfy our debt for the papers we sold. In the winter this was a very poor way to spend a Saturday evening.

ANSWERS TO BOB MULLER'S PHOTO GAME — See Page 5 :

Photo A- Washington Square Building.

Photo B- David Pressley School of Cosmetology on Washington south of Lincoln. This is a Flint Faience tile near the roofline of the David Pressley building. The March 12 Royal Oak Historical Society Town Hall Talk featured [Flint Faience Tiles A to Z](#) co-author Ken Galvas.

Photo C- Sole Sisters building on the northeast corner of Fourth and Washington.



Royal Oak Historical Society
707 Girard
Royal Oak, MI 48073
248-542-7449
www.royaloakhistoricalsociety.com

Royal Oak Historical Society Membership Application

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Please check:

Individual: \$10.00 ___ Family: \$18.00 ___ Donor: \$25.00 ___

Benefactor: \$50.00 ___ Seniors: 60+: \$8.00 _____

Mail with your check to Royal Oak Historical Society, 707 Girard, Royal Oak MI 48073

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