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## Rochester

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# A tale of the community

**By Jennifer McDonald**  
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Historical society presents  
new book on area's history

ROCHESTER — For Deborah Larsen, telling the tale of Rochester in the 20th century in “Home Town Rochester” was more than writing a book. It was a chance to document her hometown’s history.

The author, who has now penned two books, says she’s most proud of putting into words the way the community has grown and prospered, instead of withering under pressure, like so many other cities do in time.

“I was really proud that I didn’t have to write that Rochester disintegrated under the weight of economic difficulties or changes in population,” Larsen said. “It just became stronger, and it’s a great place today just like it was 100 years ago. It’s different, but it survived, and survived very well. I’m very proud of the whole community and hope to bring that out in the book.”

Larsen, who currently works as the assistant director for the Mount Clemens Public Library, says history is something she’s always been interested in. As a third-generation Rochester-area resident, she was especially excited to put her skills to work for her hometown.

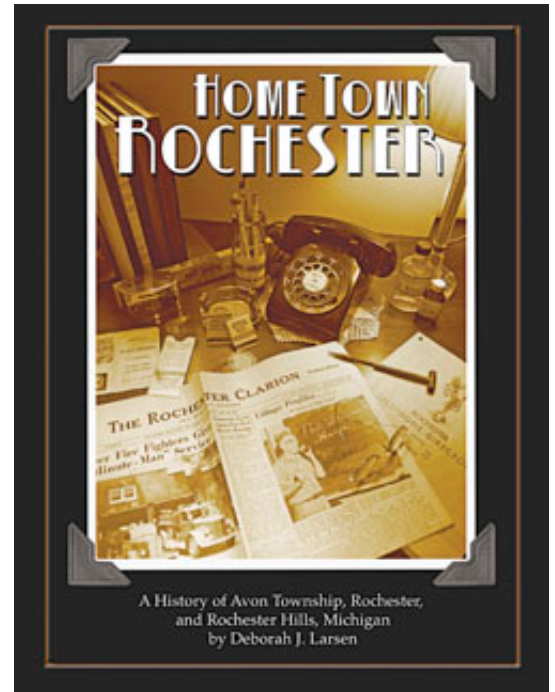
“It’s my job,” Larsen said. “But also my interest and passion. Of course when I had the opportunity to write it, I jumped at the chance.”

The book, which is being presented by the Rochester-Avon Historical Society, is the first written about Rochester’s history since the city celebrated its centennial with the publication of “A Lively Town” in 1969.

Taking Larsen about two years to complete, “Home Town Rochester” had her gathering information from old newspapers, as well as history collections at the Rochester Hills Public Library and the Oakland County Historical Society. She also interviewed people in the community.

Larsen even contributed her own memories as a young girl growing up in a small town. She especially remembers Rochester’s centennial celebration when she was about 9 years old, she said.

“Celebrating the centennial seemed like a magic time for me,” Larsen said. “That summer was full of events going on in town. Everyone was dressing up in costumes, and there was a street dance and a



The Rochester-Avon Historical Society is proud to present its newest book, “Home Town Rochester,” written by society member Deborah Larsen.

parade. For a child of that age, it was absolutely fascinating.”

The book has about 90 photographs, Larsen said, which were taken from a variety of sources, including Historical Society members and residents of the community. Most photos have never been published before, she added.

According to Rod Wilson, Rochester-Avon Historical Society president, the society had talked for many years about having a book written. It wasn't until Larsen joined the society more than two years ago that it seemed right.

“The importance of this is that there hasn't been a book written on the history of Rochester since the centennial,” Wilson said. “The community has changed so much in the last 40 years. Debbie took on the task of sharing how we transformed from a farming community to what we are today, and I think she did a phenomenal job.”

“Home Town Rochester's” recollection begins with Rochester's first settler, James Graham, in 1817 and travels through time to 2006, when mastodon bones were found at Adams and Hamlin roads.

Larsen's first book, “Selfridge Field,” was co-authored with Lt. Col. Louis J. Nigro and published in 2006. She is currently working on a project featuring notable women from Macomb County, she said.

“I hope for the newer residents it will give them a little bit of context and a way to understand how the community grew and developed into what it is today,” Larsen said. “For the residents who have been here awhile, I hope it's a fond look back for them.”

One hundred percent of the proceeds will go toward the Rochester-Avon Historical Society, Larsen said. As of press time, the book was scheduled for delivery during the weekend of Nov. 21 and will initially be available at Lytle Pharmacy, 340 S. Main St., and the Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm, 1005 Van Hoosen Road, for \$29.95.

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