



A PATCH OF HISTORY

By [Tiffany Dziurman Stozicki](#) | [Email the author](#) | October 28, 2011

News

Local Website A One-Stop Shop for History Explorers

It details historic sites in the Rochester area.

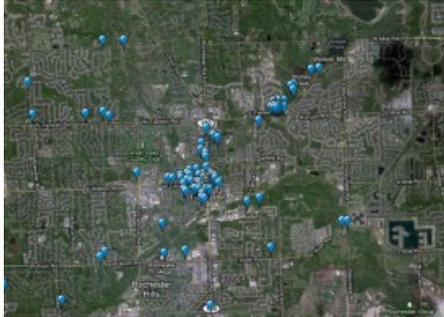
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About this column: Tiffany digs deep into our rich historical roots to uncover the interesting, colorful and sometimes humorous people, places and events that made this community what it is today. You can follow Tiffany as @History Reporter on Twitter and Facebook.

What is your favorite historical spot around town? [Tell us in the comments.](#)

Years of work and countless hours clocked by local historians, history students and volunteers have culminated in the recent release of two major publications about local history.

The first is a print publication [detailing a 20-year archaeological excavation](#) on the property of the [Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoesen Farm](#). The second is a new website featuring an interactive map of local historic sites and resources.

These two newly released publications are among the most significant contributions made to the preservation of local history, genealogy and anthropology in the past two decades.

Technology meets history

A brand new web site sponsored by the Rochester-Avon Historical Society has far-reaching possibilities. The site, [Oaklandregionahistoricsites.org](#), features a Google map of local historic sites represented with push-pin icons. Clicking on a pin reveals a detailed inventory sheet about the site along with current and/or historic photos.

The map was developed after members of the historical society entered into discussions between the City of Rochester and a local development company in hopes of preserving the [Lysander Woodward](#) house at 1385 North Main. The development company's proposal to purchase the property on which the house stood led to concerns over its possible demolition.

The proposal has since been rescinded and the house remains, but for many in the historical society, the discussions revealed the fact that very few people knew about the structure's historic significance.

The near loss of yet another historic resource in Rochester got society members thinking about how to make more people aware of the area's historic sites in a way that is simple and accessible.

According to a press release from the historical society, the web site was created as a "one-stop resource for anyone interested in exploring our community's historic sites."

Furthermore, the historical society believes the site will "encourage local history education and research, appreciation and support of our wonderful historic buildings and also be a help to those interested in heritage tourism and pride of place."

The web site is also beneficial to many professionals, including historians, genealogists, real estate professionals, journalists, architects and engineers seeking credible information about all sorts of local historic properties and resources.

The descriptions for each property listed on the map is "all the information you would need if you were to nominate the property for the national or state register of historic places," said historical society board member and web site project leader Jim Hopkins.

Properties on the map must be 75 years or older (unless the listing is a monument or is less than 75 years of age but eligible for the National Register of Historic Places). The map currently includes local homes, buildings and businesses. Using GPS coordinates other historic resources such as trees and sites long-lost to development and suburban sprawl can also be listed on the map. At the moment, only a few properties within Rochester and Rochester Hills are listed. More will come.

The information for each listed site can include construction dates, names of architects and builders, property additions and changes, architectural styles and features, names of property owners and occupants, and more. Visitors to the site can search for a property by address or property ID number.

Other local historical agencies, Hopkins noted, assisted with the creation of the map by offering suggestions and pertinent sites. These agencies include the Oakland Township Historical Society, the Rochester Historical Commission, the Rochester Hills Historic Districts Commission and the Oakland Township Historic District Commission.

The Rochester-Avon Historical Society hopes more historical and political entities from across Oakland County will get on board and add sites to the map.

Hopkins asks that museums, cities and historical groups within Oakland County contact the Rochester-Avon Historical Society to find out how they can be involved in updating the map with historic resources from their jurisdiction.

The site, launched Oct. 1, is already being noticed around the state of Michigan. The Michigan Historical Society has asked Hopkins to make a presentation about the website in March.

In addition to the map, the Rochester-Avon Historical Society hopes to soon begin utilizing smart phone technology to help increase awareness of historic properties among downtown shoppers and visitors, as well as bicyclists and hikers coming through town and down the trails.

"We are really open to where we can go with this," said Hopkins. "It's going to put Rochester on the map. It'll bring in younger people; drive them to the website to show them [the historical society] is a neat group of people."

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9:30 am on Friday, October 28, 2011

Thanks for spreading the word about this resource, Tiffany!

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Rob Ray

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4:13 pm on Friday, October 28, 2011

This sounds somewhat similar to a recommendation and offer I had made to Patrick McKay regarding the Rochester Museum:

<http://rochester.patch.com/articles/what-has-rochester-lost-museum-exhibit-illustrates-changes>

I'd like to make the same offer to the Rochester-Avon Historical Society if they're interested.

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