

RELIVING

The Rochester Era

July/August

The Rochester-Avon Historical Society Newsletter

2012

Rochester Avon Historical Society Election Results

At the June 16th, RAHS Annual Picnic, Dave Gifford received the Best New Member Award for work on the mouse pads, Janet Potton was honored with the Best Board Member Award for her constant dedication, hard work, and all of her contributions. Jim Hopkins received the Best Over All Member Award for his many accomplishments over the past year, including work on the Historic Sites website and QR Codes.

Jim Hopkins was elected RAHS President, filling the position of Rod Wilson (14 year president of RAHS). Others elected were, Brian Dunphy, Vice President; Mary Howarth, Treasurer; Janet Potton, corresponding Secretary; and June Hopaluk, Recording Secretary. Sue Hohf and Carole Tough, Members at Large. Rod Wilson will remain on the board as the past president.



The Puddle Dance, W. 3rd and Pine, July, 1976
Photo by Clarion Photographer, John Pearson

First Mount Avon Cemetery Walk — Buy Your Tickets Soon!

RAHS will present its first annual Mount Avon Cemetery Walk on Saturday, September 29 from 1-5 p.m., and you won't want to miss this entertaining and educational event! Timed tours will depart via shuttle van from the municipal parking lot at Third and Walnut streets. Upon arrival at Mount Avon, tour guests will stroll through the cemetery with a guide and meet a number of characters from Rochester's history, all attired in period costume. Tickets for the cemetery walk are \$15 and will go on sale at the downtown Sidewalk Sales days, July 12-14. There are a limited number of tickets available for each tour time, so buy your tickets early!

Please thank our community sponsors for their generous support of the Mount Avon Cemetery Walk: Rochester Hills Chrysler Jeep Dodge; Potere-Modetz Funeral Home; Pixley Funeral Home

For more information, e-mail admin@rochesteravonhistoricalsociety.org or phone 248-375-2974.

**Summer Fun in Avon Park
from
Remembering Rochester
by Deborah J. Larsen**

I grew up in a neighborhood bordering what is now the Rochester Municipal Park, known in those days as Avon Park. The park was both our playground and our family picnic area. Today, the playground is located in the same general area as it was when I was a kid in the 1960s, but it looks a bit different now. We didn't have engineered "playscapes," but we did have the monkey bars, jungle gym, teeter-totter, merry-go-round and the ever-popular swing set and slide. No environmentally friendly, non toxic, low-impact structures, these; most were constructed out of iron or galvanized pipe. They didn't have a foot of rubber mulch beneath them to cushion our falls, either. We landed on the concrete-like ground - beaten hard by thousands of kids' feet over the years - got up, brushed off our skinned knees and got on with the game. The seats on the swing set were rubber, and after few hours of heating up under the summer sun, they reached a temperature that could peel the skin from the backs of our legs. Likewise, the slide (constructed of shiny sheet metal - not plastic) was hot enough to scorch our backsides.

We learned some of life's little lessons on that playground in Avon Park. The teeter-totter was a terrible danger; more than one kid took a smack from that 2x10 piece of lumber when bailing off the end of the board. The sympathy that we got from our parents ran something along the lines of "well, you've learned not to do *that* again, haven't you?" I suppose they figured that we were learning a lesson in physics - the use of the fulcrum, or maybe that every action produces an equal and opposite reaction.



Water Slide — Jim Hopkins is boy on the slide — Avon Park water photos courtesy of Jim. 1948

Brown Bag Luncheon Meetings & RAHS Library Lecture Night Will Resume in the Fall

Meanwhile:

The Oral History Committee will continue to meet over the summer and into fall: Saturday, July 14 and Aug. 18, Sept. 8, and Oct. 20.

Meetings begin at 9 a.m., in the Dairy Barn at the Rochester Hills Museum. New folks and members are invited to participate in this fascinating project.

We interview, transcribe, help with video interviews. If this interests you, please contact Janet Potton at (248) 652-7296

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Our **Genealogy Group**, which meets each month at Rochester Hills Public Library, is in recess during the summer months. Our next meeting is September 18th.

From the President Jim Hopkins

I thank all of you who gave me a “pat on the back” and elected me as president of RAHS. It will take more than one person to replace the wonderful dedication Rod has given RAHS over the years. There is much for us to do, as there are many interesting and exciting projects and activities ahead of us.



Participation is the **Key** to any organization and we have a rainbow of opportunities for involvement. I personally ask everyone of our members to join us, in whatever way they can, to help grow our organization. Participating in projects is the way to share your expertise and knowledge. Part-time and one time contributions of your time are always welcome. As some sage once said: “Rust Never Sleeps” — stay active with us.

To this end, I thank all of you for your hard work and dedication to all we do. As an all volunteer group it is especially wonderful for RAHS to be on the receiving end of your efforts.

We welcome your volunteerism and spirit – come and join our fun! Downtown Sidewalk Sales are scheduled for July 12 thru July 14. This year should be particularly exciting as we will be set in the alleys of Rochester due to the Main Street construction project. Downtown Rochester has done much to maintain our traditional events during this major disruption of Main Street. **Please sign up to work at our RAHS sales booth.** The RAHS Sales Booth is a great way to introduce ourselves to those who don't know us and to invite new members. Sidewalk Sale Days are always fun days. Jim's email: nark1non@gmail.com

US Mail Delivery: Back by Popular Request

In May/June, we experimented with emailing the ERA newsletter to all members who have an email address. Our hope was to offset postage and printing costs; however, a number of readers have requested that we send their copy US Mail, as they prefer to have the newsletter on paper-- in their hand.

As my aunt Mary Wilson used to say when asked if she would like a cup of tea – “I'll take it in my hand, if you please,” which is country Scots for saying: “No fuss, in a cup/no saucer.” As it turns out, a number of our members prefer to have their newsletter “in hand,” rather than by email. We honor both preferences:

So – have a cup of tea (or coffee) in your hand, and read the paper copy of the home delivered Rochester Era, or receive an electronic copy instead: your choice. Those of you who prefer electronic delivery, use your old mouse pad for a coffee mat, and use your new Rochester Avon Historical Society Mouse Pad (on sale at Lytle Pharmacy, Main Street), then read The Rochester Era online. **Let me know by email if you wish to continue receiving an online copy, otherwise your newsletter will arrive by US Mail. Your editor: (248) 375-0808 or bvcather@gmail.com**

From Our Past President Rod Wilson

Congratulations to Jim Hopkins, newly elected president of RAHS – and to all of the officers who were re-elected. Congratulations also to other board members who agreed to continue in the capacity that they are serving. RAHS is in good hands to take the organization to the next level. The following are some of the comments I made at the Annual Picnic/Meeting where elections took place.



Rod, wearing his famous hat, with its new hatband, which formally and for all time, designates him Mr. Rochester.

Early in 1998 I received a call saying there was an opening on the Board of Directors for RAHS and would I consider serving as a member at large. I agreed and at the first board meeting I attended, they agreed to sign a contract for \$30,000 to produce a video of Rochester's past. It was that decision that helped catapult our organization forward. We then had money to run project or support the Rochester hills Museum at VanHoosen Farm. In June, 1998, I was elected president—and here we are 14 years later.

During those 14 years we have been involved in many projects; here are a few:

Thanks Rod for All that You Do

Downtown Sidewalk Sale, Heritage Festival, Greater Rochester Heritage Days, Lagniappe, Kris Kringle Market, Restoration and Re dedication of the Honor Roll – WW II Memorial. We spear headed this community project and the community responded with \$150,000 in monetary and in-kind donations to make the memorial restoration a reality. While we tried to save the Rochester Paper Mill, we were not able to do so and that area is slated for condominium development. We were able to help keep the farmstead at Rochester College from being leveled. The farmstead remains in the local historic district and is one of the last remaining farmsteads in Rochester Hills. We now offer monthly Walking Tours of Rochester from May through October and also tours for special events. We average almost 300 people a year who take the tour.

Our work in helping to preserve the iconic Rochester Grain Elevator has been fun, it remains at its historic location. A few years ago, we had a community paint-in-to “Make the Elevator Shine”. LaVere Webster did his magic in restoring the 1938 WPA Marvin Beerbohm mural at the Rochester Community Schools Administrative Center.

Fund raisers have included sale of the Cat's Meow Buildings (miniatures) of Rochester. Now we are having a clearance of these items and are moving on to other fund raising ideas, such as more books, calendars, etc. RAHS has published a number of books: Rochester-Preserving History – a Pictorial Journey; Historical Tour Guide; Home Town Rochester, Remembering Rochester, and The Rochester ERA newsletter. We continue to collect oral histories and are working on placing half a dozen sites on the National Register of Historic Places. We have already been successful in having the Rochester Grain Elevator placed on National Register of Historic Places. I was selected as the Distinguished Volunteer in Historical Preservation by the Historical Society of Michigan.

Thank you to my wife, Susan, and to all of you for allowing me to help move the organization forward. I appreciate all of the cooperation to make these things happen. Jim, now it is your turn to take us to the next level.

Larry Schnaidt Remembers RHS 1960

I remember so much about the times some of us boys would head down to the company picnic area of Park Davis, down Rochester Road. We would do a little fishing and hiking and on warm days we would strip and jump in the river. Only problem was, they had a guard that would patrol the area. One day we almost got caught with our pants down, if you know what I mean.

Soooo many things that I remember about Avon Park in the summers—the activities that the city did for us kids in the park and the swimming in the stream. During that time they kept the dam gates closed. We would jump off the forbidden downstream side until, one time, one guy (don't remember his name) broke his neck because he did not jump out far enough to clear the stone foundations.

As for school, I remember our 11th grade biology trip to the woods. Some of the kids walked out of the stores and restaurants without paying—until the police showed up as we were on the bus to leave. The stunt canceled our senior trip.



**Diving from the dam, Upriver
(the safe side)**



Life guards were hired, more adult supervision! And organized swimming activities — with prizes (1959?)

Crickin': Jennifer Kemler Kaski and Melanie Swords — RHS 1982

I met them for lunch at Uptown Marios — favorite kid pastime — Crickin' as in being in Paint Creek — and tubing! The worn out gym shoes from school were re-purposed as crick shoes. There were stones and roots and glass and who knows what else in those less environmentally conscious days.

For tubes, kids needed a connection, like say, a dad in the gravel business. Truck tubes were the best! Huge + covered valve stems. Car tires, not so good, thinner, valve stems exposed (Ouch!!). Inflate at a kid-friendly gas station: Oak, the little station across from Pixley, or Gulf Station. Later, buy gasoline there, when old enough to drive! True customer loyalty! Drift on the current, get off before the killer Paint & Clinton junction. Float for hours: water, sun, leaves & bird song! Do this for as many summer days as you possibly can.



Pike from the Clinton (with Al Frink, Ford Thompson and Jim Hendershott) also Boys camping along Stoney Creek—1950s

Join the Rochester Avon Historical Society Today!

Bi-monthly newsletters-monthly meetings with guest speakers-downtown Rochester historical walking tours-monthly lunchtime talks by long-time area residents-oral history projects-book projects-research projects-and much more!

Rochester Avon Historical Society Membership Application

___ New ___ Renewal

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail Address: _____

___ \$10 Student ___ \$18.00 Individual ___ \$25.00 Family ___ \$35.00 Contributing
___ \$75.00 Institution ___ \$250.00 Patron

Areas of Interest – How would you like to participate?

___ Historic Research ___ Genealogy Research ___ Special Project Volunteer ___ Antique Appraisal Day

___ Annual Picnic ___ Oral History ___ Historic Walking Tour Guide ___ Fundraising ___ Heritage Days

___ Sidewalk Sales ___ Refreshments at Meetings ___ Publications ___

Other _____

Mail to: Rochester-Avon Historical Society, P.O. Box 80783, Rochester, MI 48308-0783

Me, Doug and Ewe

By Jerry Stone, RHS 1957

The demand for wool began to decline right after WWII with the introduction of synthetic materials. One of the biggest sheep farms in the area belonged to the Hardy family who had combined two farms located on a 360 acre section on Runyon Rd. (25 Mile rd.). The matriarch of the family was, and is, Aunt Jean who will celebrate her 103rd birthday in November. As the sheep population declined, the farm was supported by corn, hay and wheat crops. By the fifties the farm had evolved into a game preserve with Pheasant thriving beyond belief. Aunt Jean's sister Pauline married a fella named Jerry and their son Doug has been a close friend of mine since diaper-hood. Our parents belonged to the 1st Congregational Church, which provided a nursery. That's where I first met Doug.

Several times a year Doug and his family came to Michigan from their home in the hills of Kentucky. (He has been a resident there for over 40 years, they still call him a flatlander.) On a trip here last Summer we visited Aunt Jean, who still lives in the original farm house. Her memory is sharp, and she told a story about one of our escapades.

Fall of 1955. A beautiful sunshiny day and temperatures an the 60's. Bird season is winding down. We have been hunting since daylight and are now headed in for lunch. I'm guessing we will enjoy Aunt Jeans broiled lamb chops. After lunch she has a chore for us. She has a ewe penned up in the barn ,and it needs to be delivered to the slaughter house in town. So we set about the task. Maybe we can squeeze in some more hunting before dark.

We go to the barn, corner the sheep and hog tie it. We are carrying it out to the pickup for the trip to town. Doug's Dad is apparently going thru a midlife crisis be-

cause he has just purchased a 1955 Ford Sunliner Convertible. It's aqua and white with a white interior and it sits sparkling in the sunlight right next to the beat up old pickup. We stop. I look at Doug and he looks at me. We both look at the pickup and then the nice new car. Without a word being said a decision has been made. We'll take the convertible. We prop the ewe up in the corner of the back seat, tie a red handkerchief over her head, babushka style, add the sunglasses that are hanging on the rear view mirror, and I sit next to her with my arm around her shoulders and we are off to town.

A day like this day and the Village of Rochester is a huge outdoor mall. It's an event and the sidewalks are crowded with shoppers and people socializing. We enter Main St. from Parkdale and from the Dairy Queen to the Kroger store on 2nd and Main. We are a one-car parade. I don't know how Doug is able to drive. We are laughing so hard, our eyes are blinded by tears. Horns are honking like it's New Year's Eve and people are waving and shouting at us. We milk the attention for all it's worth and we turn on 2nd St., again on Walnut Blvd. and make a second pass along Main. On this pass, the photographer for the Rochester Clarion stops us for a picture. Having fulfilled our need for attention, we continue to the slaughter house and deliver the ewe. Throughout the trip she has been well mannered, a soft bleat once in a while which I took for laughter. We return to the farm and report in. No one has noticed that we had taken the car and no one knows about our excursion. That is until the following Wednesday when The Clarion came out and there we were on the front page.

Thomas Wolf wrote [You Can't Go Home Again](#). But yes, I believe you can go home again — if your memory is intact and your mind's eye has 20/20 vision.

Reprinted from [The Happening](#), Danish Village



Photo found in a wooden box filled with glass negatives at the Harriman Farm on Hamlin Road in the 1970s. Several of the Harriman children play in shade on their father's property. The house in the background is likely two houses, possibly the manager's house and the boarding house for Ferry Morse Seed Co. Notice the wind mill in background.

Date unknown, photo by Jacob C. Harriman, early Kodak camera.

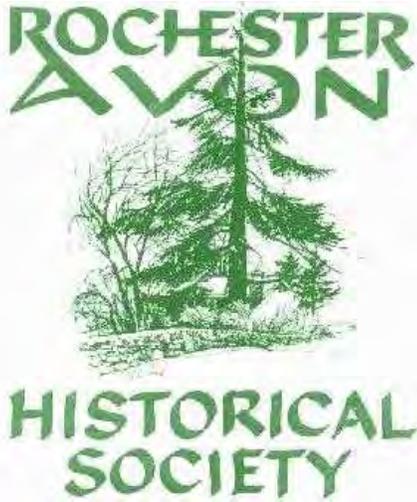
From the Editor

Write or phone the editor if you have something you wish we would cover.

Time and place photos are welcome.

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*Pride in
Preserving
the Past*