

RELIVING

The Rochester Era

September/October

The Rochester-Avon Historical Society Newsletter

2012

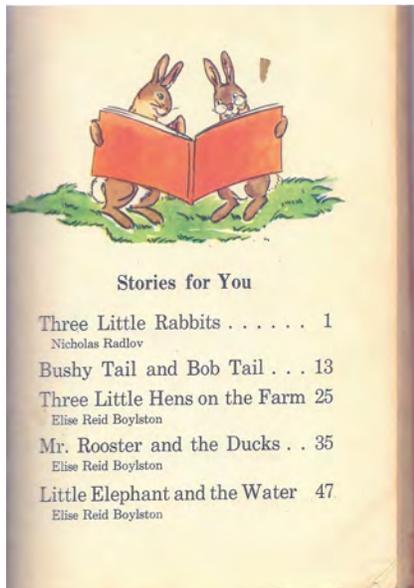
The New Year Starts Now

September is the start of a new year for schools, organizations, and many other endeavors that operate by fiscal year. RAHS fiscal year is July 2012-2013. Thus the RAHS Board met for one long day this summer. The yearly RAHS plan was hammered out, inflated, pruned, and finally — revealed.

There are enough projects, proposals, and diversity of interests to keep everyone busy (dare we say also happy?). See page 6 of this newsletter for information about joining a Community involvement Project in 2012-

Ed. Note to the Readership: We really don't have much to say about October — so, stay alert for emails, and announcements in local news media for October events/activities.

Fun in Story (published in 1940, Holt Winston, was adopted as the Primary textbook for the Rochester Community School System., 2nd semester, 1st grade. School books had to be purchased by families — book was still in use—1956.



Puppet Theater project

In the 1950s puppets were very popular with kids — here boys pose near the tennis court for a photo with their class project. Building in the background is today's administrative building.

Changes: When Dues are Due

We try to make life easier when we can, and as a result, at our Planned Year Meeting, the RAHS Board decided the following new policy:

Our membership dues will change from annual with the month you joined to everyone being due by July 1. Dues will be pro-rated for current members and new members.

If you joined or are joining from June through November, you pay the full year of dues; if you joined or are joining from December through May, you pay 50% of the full year membership.

Mr. Kevern Writes to Us:

In 1955 we arrived in Rochester where we had signed contracts to teach in the district. It was exciting and would begin careers that we would both enjoy and never forget.

My first year of teaching....Rochester High School! It was a wonderful year with such good memories that have carried me into retirement. My wife's first year was at Harrison Central School as a 4th grade teacher. Like me, she loved her job. Great kids, great parents, great town and as I have said, great memories!

My wife retired from the Rochester School District in 1993 and I retired from Oakland University. When September comes each year, we have that feeling that we should be going "back to school."

Thanks to Don Baldwin, who was the superintendent for the school district in 1955, we found a perfect place to live, raise our family and enjoy our careers.

Rochester, a wonderful place to remember!

Ron Kevern



Regular Meetings of RAHS Committees Resume for 2012

The Oral History Committee will meet Sept. 8 and Oct. 20.

This committee remains one of the most popular RAHS committees. 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, and help with video interviews. If this interests you, please contact Janet Potton at (248) 652-7296

* * *

Genealogy Group, is also open to all. Come join us **Sept. 18th**. Meetings are on the 3rd Tuesday of each month, January through May, at the Rochester Hills Public Library, 2nd Floor conference Room

Time: 1:00 to 3:0 p.m.

RAHS BROWN BAG LUNCH

The Rochester - Avon Historical Society will present its first Brown Bag Lunch of the season on **Tuesday, September 4**, beginning at 12 noon at the Rochester Community House, 816 Ludlow Street in Rochester. Those of you who have attended know what wonderful stories are told about Rochester. The guest speaker for September is Bob Gaylor. For 24 years Bob worked at the Oakland University Library and was the Rare Book Archivist. He lived in the Gate House of Meadow Brook from 1967-1997. From his stories you will be entertained with a discussion of the outbuildings of Meadow Brook Hall. Bring your lunch if you wish; cookies and coffee are provided.

From the President Jim Hopkins

Summer is almost over and RAHS has been busier than usual. Due to the number of projects and events that we are involved in, your Board of Directors held monthly meetings during the summer months. I want to thank the members that were able to attend these meetings to help us keep moving forward.

Two members have volunteered to take the reins of two committees. Dave Gutnecht has become the new membership chairman and Dave Gifford is the new media chairman. They both jumped into the race running at full speed. We are very lucky to have these two members add their talents to our mix.

The “Stories in the Stones” cemetery walk project is moving along nicely. Tickets are for sale at the Rochester Regional Chamber of Commerce office during their regular office hours. We will have them available at the Brown Bag on Sept. 4, and at the Thursday Regular meeting/lecture on Sept. 6. I hope you have been able to view the video that Leslie Mack put together to help promote it. We have it featured on the RAHS Facebook page.

Our new web page oaklandregionalhistoricsites.org (ORHS) was nominated for the Historical Society of Michigan’s Annual Award - Communications: Newsletters and Websites. I am proud to say that we will have some very, very good news to announce in the next few weeks. The award ceremony and dinner will be in Monroe on Friday Sept. 28. We will let you all know more details when we are able to do so via email blast.



Members will be receiving their new membership directories in the mail in the next few weeks. This project was started by Carol Tough last year and she has done a tremendous amount of work again this year to bring this directory to all of you. Please thank her when you see her. The Board and I thank her personally for her unselfish hard work on this project.

Hope to see you all at our upcoming meetings and events.



Trout Fishing on Beautiful Paint Creek — Summer of 2012 — Good-bye summer

Red, White and Blue, Bus No.13

Today the Rochester Community School District is one of the larger school districts; its boundaries include Rochester, Rochester Hills and Oakland Township (about 76 square miles). There are 13 elementary schools, four middle schools, three high schools, one adult education school, and one alternative high school. There is a 93 percent graduation rate and 95 percent of graduates attend a post-secondary school. Today 109 buses serve the school district, transporting about 10,000 students a day.

The Rochester Era newspaper of August 12, 1949 announced the purchase of five new school buses. They were red, white and blue buses. The one I remember is bus 13 – which is rather an odd number – since there were only five buses. Riders had to live one mile away from school to get a ride. If you did live a mile away from school—it was much faster to walk. There were 1,948 students in the entire Rochester Community School district — up 122 students from the count in 1948.

Bus No. 13 took an hour or more to do the route. My neighborhood on South Street was first in the morning. The bus continued up Frank's Hill (known officially as Newberry Road), picking up a few kids on the way to John R Road, then East on Avon Road until Livernois Rd., then Livernois to Harding Road, then to the “old school” on the hill in town. There were always some shenanigans on the bus.

Our bus driver was a patient guy named George, but he could be pushed. He had a string of things he would rather do than deal with us – for instance, “pull out all of my own teeth; take out my own appendix; drive a herd of cats,” etc. No one had lunch in a bag, everyone had a lunch pail. In winter the bus smelled of wet wool and mayonnaise. George: “It smells like a sheep barn in here!” If it got warm, we opened the windows. George, “Close the windows, you hooligans, It's cold in here! You all born in a barn!” We thought he was a great, funny guy.

After a heavy rain, the bus stopped just before the Avon Road Bridge and we all got out and walked over the bridge, which was rather frail in the 1949. George would drive the empty bus over the bridge, slowly, above the swollen Clinton River. Once we were safely on the other side of danger, we got back on the bus to progress up muddy, rutted Livernois to equally muddy and rutted Harding Road. If you missed the bus – that was the worst. No one's mother had a car, and not many mothers had a driver's license. A missed bus meant a day at home, helping with household chores and amusing the younger kids—or in my case, dealing with relatives who lived with us.

When my children were babies, I sang them the songs I had learned on the bus: “Jesus Loves Me”, the “B-I-B-L-E”, “Wise Man Built His House Upon the Rock”, and dozens of other church songs as we were Methodist, Baptist, Nazarene, and Catholic on our end of town. We were also, most of us, not “lifers” – people who were second or third generation local. So, we learned to sing “Down in the Valley” and “You Are My Sunshine” and “Memphis Girl” and other traditional songs. My favorite: “Go Tell Aunt Rhoadie, The Old Gray Goose is Dead”. When my grandchildren were babies, I sang the songs to them. Now sometimes when I am in the garden, I sing them for myself.

There were bullies and book fights and teasing and flirting. A boy two grades ahead of me said I would look pretty if wore some lipstick. I told my mother (I was 11 or 12) and the fight began. Eventually I won the right to buy Tangee lipstick at the D&C store in town – Tangee was faintly orange and smelled of tangerine. The boy didn't notice, but I still remember his name.

Note: Current enrollment at Rochester Community Schools at last count: 14,800 **BVC**



1949 Green Dodge Coronet
(source: Wikipedia—8/28/2012)

First Date

By James VanNocker, RHS class of 1957

When I was a seventh grader in the Rochester Schools (around 1951-52), the norms of those times seemed to promote earlier dating than appears to be the case today based upon observing my grandchildren who attend nearby Lake Orion Schools. In any event, I recall that in my seventh grade class there was to be a junior high dance where boys took girls as dates. This event was to represent my very first date. At the tender age of twelve, transportation was an issue since neither I nor my friends were old enough to drive. The solution was typically for the boy's parent (or parents) to serve the chauffeur function. Such was the case for me on my very first date to a junior high school dance which incidentally took place directly across the street on Wilcox from our home. Donna Hohf, also a seventh grader, was to be the girl I asked, and surprisingly, she accepted. I remember her as a cute, dark-haired, little girl who played clarinet with me in the band.

What I particularly recall about the period leading up to this event was the substantial amount of coaching I received at home from my parents concerning proper etiquette. I was instructed to go up to the front door of her home, hold that door open for her as she exited, proceed to our car (a 1949 green Dodge), open and hold the passenger-side rear door for her, and then walk around behind the car and enter from the other side. It seemed in this instance I must have been a good listener because I carried out the process flawlessly except for one event beyond my control. About the time that I reached the rear of the car after helping Donna to enter, my father unexplainably drove off. Fortunately, he did not go too far before recognizing that he had left me behind, and he returned to pick

up me. I remember how he would for many years describe the look of confusion, deflation and betrayal that he observed on my face as he peered into his rear view mirror and saw me standing all alone in the street. When I told that story later to my eighth grade English teacher, Miss Winnie Wilson, I remember her laughing uncontrollably. I look back at those simpler times where there was a premium placed on being proper and wonder just how much we have lost along the way. * * *

School Shoes

By Debbie Larsen

Each year in the late summer, as The First Day loomed larger and larger on the calendar, my mother marched my sister and me into Burr's Bootery on Main Street to be fitted for our "school shoes." We walked past the elegant ladies' shoes in the store window and dutifully took our seats in the customer chairs. Jack Burr soon appeared to discuss with our mother what her requirements were, and then, from beneath his stool, he whipped out a wooden rule with a slide stop on it to measure our feet. He relayed the pertinent information to one of the two senior ladies who served as his clerks, and they would disappear into the bowels of the store to hunt up the appropriate stock.

Once the shoes were brought out, Mr. Burr laced our feet into them and commanded us to walk around while he watched, pinched our toes and wiggled our heels to make sure that the shoes were not too loose but still allowed sufficient "room to grow." After all, money didn't grow on trees, and we were allowed one pair of school shoes per year; barring catastrophe, these shoes were supposed to see us all the way through the following summer.

Having no arches to speak of, I was doomed to wear saddle shoes with the corrective Thomas heel all through my elementary school days, and this was in the era when saddle shoes were definitely not in fashion! I dreamed of the day when I could walk into that store and order Jack Burr to fit me with a stylish, fashionable shoe; but alas, by the time I was ready for that, Burr's Bootery was but a memory.



**Burr's Bootery
On Main —
School Shoes**



Community Involvement Projects

Research Committee: Research is being done of a number of historic sites and homes. The Woodward House and Frank/Newberry House are nominated for the National Register of Historic Places and being finalized by Deborah Larsen. Committee currently has the Woodward House and Frank/Newberry House. Join us if you like history, mystery, and historic research.

Oral Histories: This continues to be one of our most successful committees and has accumulated many oral histories from our citizens. Interviews are recorded by voice and video. Additional help is always needed both interviews and for transcribing. Janet Potton is the contact person.

Oakland Regional Historic Sites (ORHS): Our newest website was originally developed to highlight greater Rochester area historic sites. The address is oaklandregionalhistoricsites.com. This is a must "check out" website for you to visit! Chairperson of this new venture: Jim Hopkins.

Quick Response codes or QR Codes: QR Codes are the new bar codes of today. They appear in print as blocks of squiggly lines and seen in newspapers, magazines, and promotional items. You need to download a free cell phone application as a reader for these codes. RAHS is placing QR Codes on historic buildings I downtown Rochester. Many more businesses will be receiving QR Codes in the near future. Contact Person: Jim Hopkins

Other RAHS projects and activities are reported on in this newsletter. These represent a small taste of what we are doing. Check one or more of these activities out — and join us.

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

Mrs. William A. Fox Writes

Great things happened to that little log house of Alexander Graham, which stood on the lot where the American Legion Hall stands. There was born within its walls the first white child in the county, and then it sheltered the first school in Avon Township, and dates show that it was the first in Oakland County in 1823. Miss Marcia LeRoy was the first teacher and had about ten pupils. Wm. Burbank and Gad Norton built the first building for educational purposes on the lot now occupied by the Congregational Church, which had been donated for that purpose by the proprietors of the village plat. It was a small frame building, subsequently moved to the corner of Main and Third Streets, and occupied by Dr. R. C. Sprague as a drug store on the sites of the present stone store. In 1850 it (the frame building) was moved to the opposite side of the street and used as a blacksmith shop until destroyed by fire.

Our second school house was built in 1835 and burned in 1843. From that time until 1846, school was kept in the basement of the Christian Church, now the Baptist. During that year a third school was built on Pine Street, which was afterward moved to the east side of Walnut Street and used as a town hall and later as the First Methodist church, finally to Main Street for a furniture store. Afterward the house being destroyed by fire.

In 1847 a building was erected for academic purposes and the society called Avon Lyceum was opened by Prof. Robert Kedzie, afterward president of the State Agricultural College. It attained a high standing as a private school, but in 1857 ceased to exist as such, and its property was transferred to District No. 5 of Avon Township. The movement for the Lyceum was largely aided by Prof. Peter Mayers, a teacher at that time but who died before the completion of the building. The school bell was rung for the first time at his funeral. Antoinette Brown Blackwell, who afterward won national fame, was also one of the early teachers.

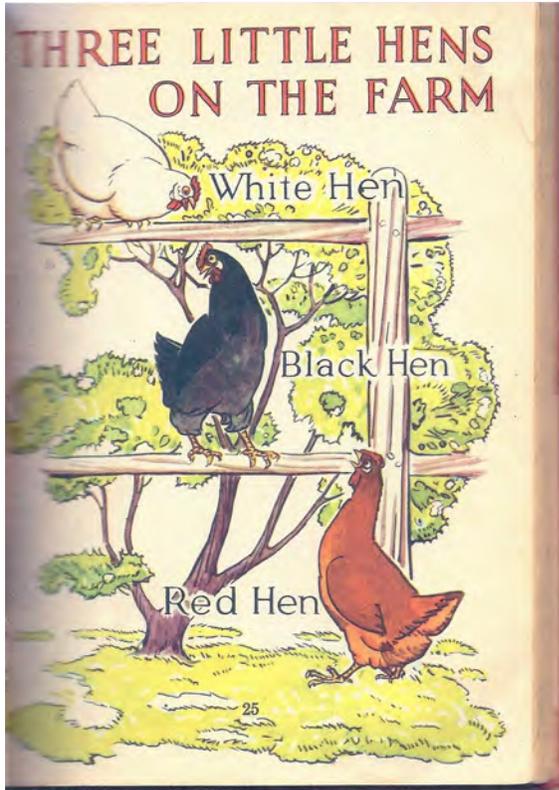
The union school became a graded school in 1865 and living in Rochester at the present time is a lady who was the primary teacher for 18 years, beginning in the late 1860s. I refer to Mrs. Mary Martz.

Excerpted from a handwritten manuscript by Mrs. W. . Fox, Rochester Women's' Club, Oct. 9, 1925. Women were not known in public by their given names, Mrs. W. A. Fox first name was Susan

Ray Henry to Present: Mount Avon: Gateway to History

September 6th, Rochester Hill Public Library Auditorium, 500 Olde Town Road, Rochester — 7 p.m. This RHAS presentation is open to the public and one need not be a RAHS member to attend.

Local resident and historian, Ray Henry, will discuss the various forms and meanings of tombstone iconography and tombstone tradition. New information includes, the discovery of five veterans of the War of 1812 and the history of Rochester's lone veteran of the Napoleonic Wars. Come join us.

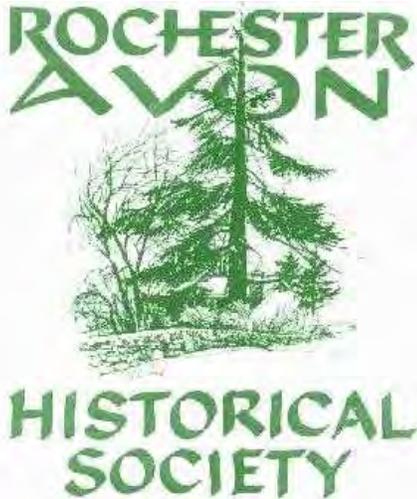


From the Editor

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

Time and place photos are welcome. May accept memoir from readership. Payment is an mailed copy of newsletter.

Bea Catherino, Editor
bvcather@gmail.com



Rochester Avon Historical Society
P O Box 80783
Rochester, MI 48309-0783

*Pride in
Preserving
the Past*