

# RELIVING The Rochester Era

May/June

The Rochester-Avon Historical Society Newsletter

2015

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## Remembering Rochester

### Vanished Rochester: Wood Dawn

By Deborah Larsen Originally Posted Wednesday, May 12, 2010

Area residents are probably familiar with the Loren Andrus Octagon House in nearby Washington Township, but may not be aware that the Rochester area once had its very own



octagon house, named Wood Dawn. The house disappeared from our local landscape decades before I was born, but fortunately one of the nineteenth-century pamphlets promoting Rochester carried this picture of it, so we have some idea what it looked like.

Wood Dawn stood on a farm just west of the village of Rochester, in the area that we know today as Great Oaks. According to a 1909 memoir by Samuel Harris that was published in the Rochester Era, the octagon

house was built by Lyman Wilcox, who owned the property for a large part of the nineteenth century, and stood on the property during the tenure of subsequent owners including Rufus Schermerhorn and dairy farm operator John C. Day. Octagon architecture had become something of a minor sensation in the United States after an amateur architect named Orson Squire Fowler published a book in 1848 touting the benefits of the octagon house. Fowler claimed, among other things, that octagon homes were cheaper to build and heat, afforded more natural light, and provided healthier ventilation.

Rochester's octagon house was described in the Rochester Clarion in the spring of 1939, as it was being razed after Howard McGregor bought the property on which it stood for his Great Oaks Stock Farm. The Clarion said, in part:

"One of the many improvements being made on the old J.C. Day farm, west of town, is the razing of the once beautiful stone mansion occupied by its former owner in days gone by. The structure, octagon shaped, is over 100 years old, three stories high and had 42 rooms. There was a beautiful spiral stairway in the very center of the house leading from the basement direct to the glass enclosed turret three floors above, with two landings between each floor. Every piece of lumber used in the construction of the house was oak."

Wood Dawn was probably not quite 100 years old when it was torn down in 1939, despite the Clarion's claim, but it was definitely an interesting piece of Rochester's early history, now consigned to the pages of vanished Rochester.

**Remembering Rochester** is a blog featuring local history articles, photos, memories, and history-related news about Rochester and Rochester Hills (formerly Avon Township), Oakland County, Michigan.

## President's Message ... Changes on Board Align Skills, Provide New Opportunities

Volunteers make the historical society a success. That's why we work to maintain a volunteer-friendly environment, where our volunteers have the flexibility to move into areas that align with their interests and skills.



Brian Dunphy, President  
Rochester-Avon  
Historical Society

In the next several weeks, two additional changes to the RAHS Board of Directors will show how well this works.

Mary Howarth and Cary Downer have requested, and the Board has approved, a shift of their positions effective July 1. Mary, who has served ably for several terms as Treasurer, will become Director of Merchandising. Cary has most recently served as Director of Special Projects and will succeed Mary as Treasurer. Best wishes to Mary and Cary in their new responsibilities!

These aren't the only changes taking place on our Board. We learned last month that Rod Wilson will be resigning from the Board effective July 1 to pursue other interests. Rod has been a mainstay of the historical society for many years, currently serving as Second Vice President - Finance. He also has served terms as President and has long been known for his role as "Mr. Rochester," leading the historical society's downtown walking tours. Rod's experience, dedication and wisdom surely will be missed.

The changes mean that we will have three open seats on the RAHS Board: Second Vice President - Finance, Director of Fund Raising Events and Director of Special Projects. These are tremendous opportunities for members who want to get more involved with the historical society, and I urge you to consider taking on one of these positions. There's not enough space here to provide details on each, but if you contact RAHS at **248-266-5440** or **rahsupdates@gmail.com**, I can provide you with information.

As always, the efforts of dedicated volunteers make possible all of our many projects, programs and events. To volunteer, please call or email as indicated above.

## Annual Membership Dues Increase

Effective July 1, 2015:

Student:	\$15	Contributing:	\$ 50
Individual:	\$20	Business:	\$100
Family:	\$35	Patron:	\$250

## Special Offer Eases Membership Renewal

It's time to renew your RAHS membership, and do we have a deal for you! But first – did you know that RAHS has not increased membership dues for 25 years? Your Board has been diligent in looking for ways to reduce costs while continuing to provide great programs, newsletters and products. However, after much discussion, we feel a small increase in some of the membership types has now become necessary.

This increase will become effective for dues paid on or after July 1 of this year. To minimize the impact on your finances, *if you pay your dues before July 1, the current membership rates will apply. And if you renew now for more than one year, you'll save even more.*

Please complete the Membership Application form shown on page 7, and return it with your check before July 1 to take advantage of this one-time opportunity.

## New Discounts for Members

RAHS membership has its perks. One of them now is 15 percent off the regular price of any of our merchandise items purchased during Heritage Days, Downtown Sidewalk Sales, Mount Avon Cemetery Walk and Kris Kringle Market. So stop by our booth during any of these events, and receive 15 percent off your purchases.

Take advantage of this opportunity to buy gifts for family, friends and yourself—all at a savings.

**This discount applies to items purchased in person. Sale items excluded.**

## Opening Night: Another Step! Theatre in Downtown Rochester ... A Dream in Progress



Photo: Leslie Mack

By Katharine J. Burns

The Committee has been very busy completing its paper work, and we recently received from the State of Michigan confirmation of the License for Solicitation, which allows The Theatre Group of Rochester Company to solicit funds for the purchase and restoration of a movie theatre in

downtown Rochester. In addition, we are awaiting approval from the Internal Revenue Service for our 501(c)3 status, and recently were notified that final confirmation should be sent to us by the end of May, 2015. *This completes all of the paperwork and documentation needed to proceed on the theatre project!*

The three subcommittees have been working very diligently on exciting tasks. The Promotion Committee recently voted unanimously to adopt the name, **Film Society of Rochester**. Thus, the **Theatre Group of Rochester Company** name is, and will remain, our legal name; however, we will now be referred to as the **Film Society of Rochester**. Our new name made its debut at a formal presentation on March 23, 2015, to the City Council which not only included our new name but also a new logo. This included an update on the progress of our work which received unanimous support.

The Social Media Group has been discussing the design and implementation of a new website. There has been active discussion as to what it should look like and how it will work. Various models have been discussed, and it should be available soon both through: Theatre Group of Rochester Company ([theatregrouprc.org](http://theatregrouprc.org)) and also, the Film Society of Rochester ([filmsocietyofrochester.org](http://filmsocietyofrochester.org)). This is a major project, and the committee is very fortunate to have a member who is a web designer and other members who are very computer knowledgeable. Great work!

The Community Awareness Group has organized a plan for a Pop-up Movie Theatre this summer.

Hopefully it will begin with a several-day film festival in early August showing a variety of films in more than one venue. Wow! Final plans have not been confirmed, but **stay tuned**. This will then be followed by other Pop-Up-Movie Theatre movies. How much fun will that be for the Rochester community?

Lastly, we have also received great publicity recently in five articles on the theatre project of Rochester. We were all extremely pleased with their writings. This has been very helpful as we continue the work of fund raising.

So stay tuned to new developments with The Film Society of Rochester!



FILM SOCIETY OF ROCHESTER

Don't forget to check out our website:  
[www.theatregrouprc.org](http://www.theatregrouprc.org)

### 2015 Walking Tour Schedule

May 18	Monday	7:00 p.m.
June 17	Wednesday	7:00 p.m.
July 16	Thursday	7:00 p.m.
Aug 21	Friday	7:00 p.m.
Sept 19	Saturday	1:00 p.m.
Oct 18	Sunday	1:00 p.m.

"Look for the man  
in the top hat."

**Free to  
RAHS  
Members**



Photo: Leslie Mack

Seniors aged 55+ and students are \$3. Those under the age of 55 are \$5.

Tours depart from the northeast corner of the Western Knitting Mill at Water and Fourth Streets.

## Meet One Of Many New RAHS Members



By Gary Jaracz

I was born in the Motor City 64 years ago; lived in Fraser and Sterling Heights before moving to Rochester Hills in 1985. I fell in love with a 1918 farmhouse on Hamlin Rd., located across the street from the Upton Farm House. Being a home builder by trade, (owner operator of Remington Homes, Inc.) I did extensive remodeling to my place including several additions, a turret, wraparound porch, an extended six-car garage. I furnished the house with antiques, which was a big hobby of mine. My property was a bit of country in the middle of the city — it doesn't get any better than that. Even boarded horses on the five-acre pasture for several years.

Life changes, and in 2014 I left the house, sold my business and retired. Today, I still live in Rochester Hills with my best friend and life partner, Christine Pencak. I keep busy with volunteer work. I help out weekly at Gleaners food bank in Pontiac. At local OPC events you may see me as a greeter, ticket taker or whatever they need me to do. This year, I had a good time helping out at the RAHS Antique Appraisal Day; I still get a kick out of collecting old stuff.

Today, Chris and I take every opportunity to get away on weekends, or extended vacations, to go to interesting places. Most recently we went to Washington, D.C. — I can never get enough of the museums, memorials and history there.

I love my community. I am interested in its history, and I care about its future. I have to admit, I don't like the new roundabouts, and I hate to see the trees being taken down on Hamlin, Tienken and Squirrel in the name of progress. They say, "You can't fight City Hall," but I believe citizens need to make their voices heard and work toward positive changes for the future.

As a new Society member, I have attended some brown bag events so far — hope you don't kick me out for bringing my lunch in a plastic bag! The Society has a lot to offer that I enjoy, and I look forward to being a helpful member.

## Newer RAHS Member Joins Board



Bree Boettner has accepted a board position as Director, Membership, reporting to 1st Vice President, Operations, Carol Tough.

We extend our congratulations to Bree as she graduates this month from Johns Hopkins University with a Master of Arts in museum studies with a certificate in nonprofit management.

Bree has a long history of working for various museums in Southeast Michigan and looks forward to working with the Rochester-Avon Historical Society as well as beginning a new position at the Detroit Historical Museum in Visitor Services.

## New Committee Chair to Revive Oral History Project



Samantha Lawrence has stepped up to chair the RAHS Oral History Committee, reporting to 3rd Vice President, Development, Janet Potton.

Samantha plans to reactivate the process of interviewing long-time local residents to capture and transcribe their personal memories and stories. (Read more on back cover.)

The Rochester-Avon Historical Society (RAHS) was founded in 1969 to help preserve, collect and interpret the history of the greater Rochester area for present and future generations.

For much more information visit online at:

[www.rochesteravonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.rochesteravonhistoricalsociety.org)

## Upcoming Programs ... Brown Bag and Monthly Library Lecture

**Brown Bag Meeting**  
**Tuesday, May 5, 2015, at Noon**  
Rochester Community House  
816 Ludlow Street

**FREE AND  
OPEN TO THE  
PUBLIC**

### “History Lives in Grandmother’s Button Basket”

Chris Parham will examine objects such as trinkets, tools, oblique fasteners and, especially, buttons including specialty items such as the ceramic buttons that WWII era sculptor Helen E. Brett Babbington provided to J. L. Hudson during the 1940s. Parham is the Past Historian and V.P., Chairman of Competitive awards, for the Michigan Button Society, which is celebrating its 70th Anniversary in May. An advocate for appropriate storage for the preservation of old historic materials, Parham can answer questions on archival storage and conservation level care.

Bring your lunch and enjoy the free coffee, tea and cookies for this casual program.

**RAHS Library Lecture**  
**Thursday, May 7, 2015, 7:00 p.m.**  
Rochester Hills Public Library  
500 Olde Town Road

**FREE AND  
OPEN TO THE  
PUBLIC**

### “Detroit’s Historic Houses of Worship”

Barbara Krueger, one of the authors of the book “Detroit’s Historic Houses of Worship,” will discuss the art and architecture of historically significant religious buildings that represent eight denominations and nearly 100 years of history. The churches include Sainte Anne in Corktown, the Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Boston-Edison, Saint Florian in Hamtramck and Saint Mary’s in Greektown.

With her expertise on stained glass, Krueger will also discuss Tiffany windows. A stained glass artist and former elementary school teacher, Krueger is the Director of the Michigan Stained Glass Census under the auspices of Michigan State University Museum. She has traveled in France, Germany, England and Scotland to study the stained glass in churches and other buildings. Over the next several years, Krueger will be working with Michigan colleges to incorporate/encourage student research, graduate work or internships within the overall scope of the Michigan Stained Glass Census.

**Brown Bag Meeting**  
**Tuesday, June 2, 2015, at Noon**  
Rochester Community House  
816 Ludlow Street

**FREE AND  
OPEN TO THE  
PUBLIC**

### “Rochester History ‘Show and Tell”

***Our speaker this month will be YOU!***

If you have an interesting story about persons, places, or events in Rochester history, join us for “Show and Tell” at the last session of the season.

Bring any pictures or memorabilia you want to discuss and share. There will be time for only ten speakers and each speaker will be limited to five minutes. Please see Gail Kemler at the May Brown Bag, or call her at 248-651-0907 by Friday, May 29, to reserve time to share your item(s) and/or memories!

Bring your lunch and enjoy the free coffee, tea and cookies for this casual program.

**RAHS Annual Potluck Picnic**  
**Wednesday, June 10, 2015, 6:00 p.m.**  
Rochester Community House  
816 Ludlow Street

**RAHS  
MEMBERS  
ONLY**

### Annual Picnic and Volunteer Awards Presentation

The RAHS will wrap up a busy and successful year with the annual picnic/potluck. Beginning at 6:00 p.m., this promises to be an evening of good food and fellowship. Please plan on attending even if you haven’t been able to actively participate during the past year. After dinner, we will honor this year’s award winners; those hardworking members who have made exceptional contributions to the RAHS.

Highlights from the DVD, “The Early Rochester Area—Our Legacy, Your Heritage” with narrator, Mort Crim, will complete the evening’s scheduled activities.

The annual picnic is a great opportunity for members to mingle and get to know one another while sharing a meal. It is a family event and kids are welcome.

Please bring a dish to pass and your own place setting. The society will provide delicious chicken and a variety of beverages. For more information please call June at 248-652-9242.

## Greater Rochester Heritage Days

If you're in town for the Memorial Day Weekend, please plan to attend the Greater Rochester Heritage Days festival on Saturday, May 23, 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. or Sunday, May 24, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Rochester Municipal Park. There's something for everyone, so don't hesitate to invite your family or your neighbors to join in.

Stop by the RAHS sales booth to shop our merchandise offering, then visit our photo booth just a few steps away to peruse an amazing array of local historic images. Better yet, if you'd like to help work one or more two-hour shifts in either of our two booths, please call Rod Wilson at 248-651-6178.

## WWII Honor Roll

According to the online blog "Remembering Rochester," an incredible ten percent of Rochester's population served in WWII. Their names are listed on the WWII Honor Roll in Rochester Municipal Park.



Photo: Leslie Mack

Originally dedicated by the Blue Star Mothers in 1945, the memorial includes the names of 1,116 men and women from Rochester who fought in the war. Their names are etched on 16 panels of glass.

The memorial was neglected over the years and dismantled in 1963.

In 2002, the monument was rededicated after pieces of it were relocated and restored with the help of the Rochester-Avon Historical Society and several other community organizations and businesses.

Source: [www.rochesteravonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.rochesteravonhistoricalsociety.org)

## Don't Miss These Upcoming Events

Please mark your calendar now!

<p>Brown Bag Lunch Tuesday, May 5, 2015 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m.</p>	<p><b>MAY</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>sun</th> <th>mon</th> <th>tue</th> <th>wed</th> <th>thu</th> <th>fri</th> <th>sat</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1 2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10</td> <td>11</td> <td>12</td> <td>13</td> <td>14</td> <td>15</td> <td>16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>17</td> <td>18</td> <td>19</td> <td>20</td> <td>21</td> <td>22</td> <td>23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>24</td> <td>25</td> <td>26</td> <td>27</td> <td>28</td> <td>29</td> <td>30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>31</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat							1 2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31						
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<p>Historic Downtown Walking Tour Wednesday, June 17, 2015 7:00 p.m.</p>																																											

**RAHS Dues Increase Takes Effect**  
 Wednesday, July 1, 2015  
**Lock In Savings with a Multi-Year Renewal**  
 at Pre-Increase Dues Rates  
 (Details on page 2)

**RAHS Downtown Sidewalk Sales Booth**  
 Friday, July 10, 2015 - 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.  
 Saturday, July 11, 2015 - 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.  
 Sunday, July 12, 2015 - 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

<p>Historic Downtown Walking Tour Thursday, July 16, 2015 7:00 p.m.</p>	<p><b>JULY</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>sun</th> <th>mon</th> <th>tue</th> <th>wed</th> <th>thu</th> <th>fri</th> <th>sat</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> <td>9</td> <td>10</td> <td>11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>12</td> <td>13</td> <td>14</td> <td>15</td> <td>16</td> <td>17</td> <td>18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>19</td> <td>20</td> <td>21</td> <td>22</td> <td>23</td> <td>24</td> <td>25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>26</td> <td>27</td> <td>28</td> <td>29</td> <td>30</td> <td>31</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
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## Contact Information for RAHS Board of Directors and Committees

### RAHS Board of Directors

Brian Dunphy, President	248-266-5624
Carol Tough, Vice President, Operations	248-375-0084
Rod Wilson, Vice President, Finance	248-651-6178
Janet Potton, Vice President, Development	248-652-7296
June Hopaluk, Recording Secretary	248-652-9242
Mary Howarth, Treasurer	248-375-0206
Tiffany Stozicki, Director, Communications	248-650-0415
Bree Boettner, Director, Membership	248-515-0881
Leslie Mack, Director, Era Newsletter Editor	586-924-4961
Margaret Bartos, Director, Programs	248-759-4768
Cary Downer, Director, Special Projects	248-652-1854
Gail Kemler, Director, Historical Preservation	248-651-0907

### Committee Chairpersons

Deborah Larsen, Research	248-375-2974
David Gifford, Media	248-941-7587
Samantha Lawrence, Oral History	586-255-1883

## Volunteer Areas of Interest

### How would you like to participate?

- Annual Picnic
- Antique Appraisal Day
- Historic Research
- Historic Walking Tour Guide/Assistant
- Fundraising
- Genealogy Research
- Heritage Days
- Oral History
- Publications
- Refreshments at Meetings
- Sidewalk Sales
- Special Project Volunteer
  
- Other \_\_\_\_\_  
(Feel free to suggest. If we don't offer it, we may consider adding it!)

*Pricing applies to single or multi-year memberships paid by 6-30-15.*

Dues Amount	Membership Type
\$ 10 <input type="checkbox"/>	Student
\$ 18 <input type="checkbox"/>	Individual
\$ 25 <input type="checkbox"/>	Family
\$ 35 <input type="checkbox"/>	Contributing
\$ 75 <input type="checkbox"/>	Institution
\$250 <input type="checkbox"/>	Patron

## Join the Rochester-Avon Historical Society Today! Membership Application

New      Renewal

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Volunteer Areas of Interest

How would you like to participate?

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- Oral History
- Publications
- Refreshments at Meetings
- Sidewalk Sales
- Special Project Volunteer
  
- Other \_\_\_\_\_  
(Feel free to suggest. If we don't offer it, we may consider adding it!)



Mail completed form with check payable to:

**Rochester-Avon Historical Society**  
P O Box 80783  
Rochester, MI 48308-0783

## New Committee Chair to Revive Oral History Project

By Samantha Lawrence



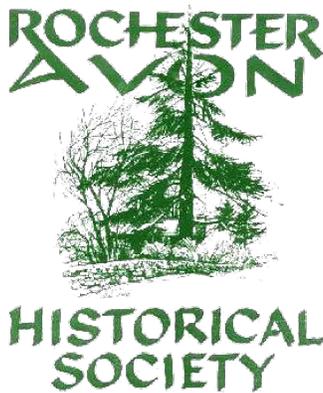
Oral history offers us a unique way of looking at Rochester's past. For almost 10 years, the RAHS Oral History Committee was dedicated to capturing and collecting the stories that only the residents of Rochester could tell.

Over time, these volunteers found it necessary to redirect their energies into higher-priority projects and, after compiling approximately 40 oral histories, the process of transcribing old interviews and conducting new ones nearly ceased.

Now, after several years of minimal activity, the RAHS Oral History Committee is being reactivated and is seeking new members! Plans are currently underway to digitize the interviews previously gathered on cassette tapes with the hope of increasing and diversifying their use. Once converted to digital format, the interviews can be used in a variety of new ways, such as on the RAHS website, in podcasts and videos or for other research and educational purposes. Ultimately, digitization will allow the oral histories to reach a larger audience by making them easier to access. With the help of enthusiastic volunteer members, new oral history interviews are anticipated to begin in late summer or early fall of 2015.

Individuals interested in conducting interviews, transcribing recordings or even identifying potential interview candidates, please contact committee chairperson, Samantha Lawrence, at [s.rae.law@gmail.com](mailto:s.rae.law@gmail.com) or 586-255-1883.

A 501(c)3 Non-Profit Organization



P O Box 80783  
Rochester, MI 48308-0783



"Pride in Preserving the Past"