

Published on C & G Newspapers (<http://www.candgnews.com>)

## Rochester

December 20, 2011

# Historical society releases book on Main Street

By **Mary Beth Almond**  
C & G Staff Writer

ROCHESTER — The Rochester – Avon Historical Society is offering a new book in preparation for the 2012 Main Street Reconstruction Project.

“Remembering Rochester — Main Street Stories,” written by Deborah Larsen, is filled with stories of the buildings on Rochester’s Main Street, collected from Larsen’s blog, “Remembering Rochester.”

Larsen, a third-generation Rochester resident and local history librarian, began blogging about the history of Rochester and Rochester Hills three years ago after doing research for her first book, “Hometown Rochester.”

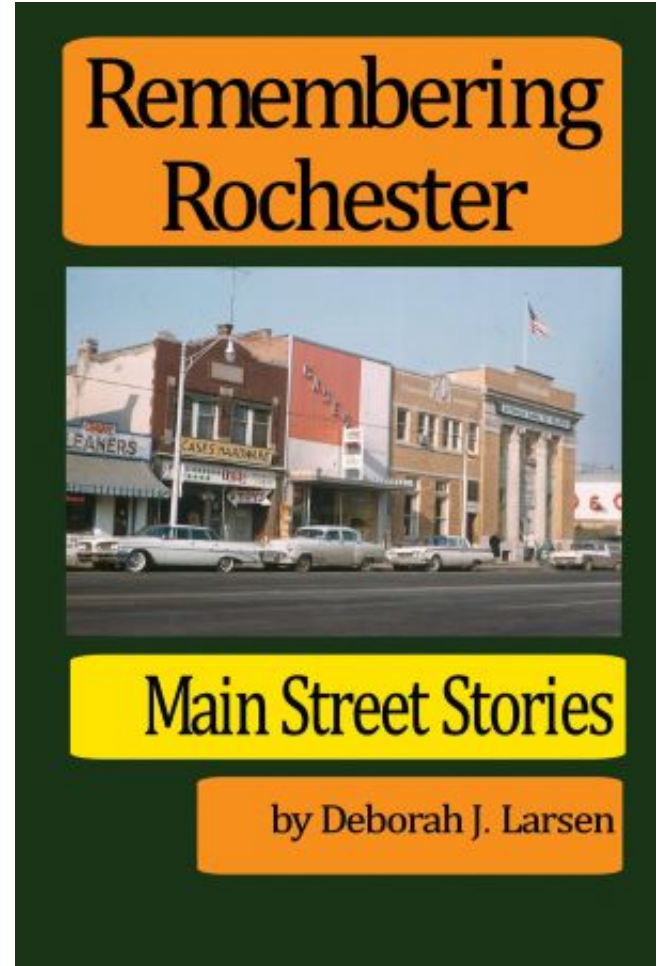
“When I did the research for that book, I ended up with a lot of little odds and ends and tidbits of information that were interesting but really didn’t fit into the manuscript for ‘Hometown Rochester,’ and I wanted to put them out there because I thought people might enjoy them, so I started writing the blog,” she said.

Larsen’s blog features a number of different series, including one called “Main Street Rochester,” for which she takes a building on Main Street and gives its background and history, and talks about the different businesses that have been in the building over time.

Earlier this year, the Historical Society approached Larsen and asked if it could publish the Main Street stories from her blog in a small soft-cover book to coincide with the 2012 Main Street Reconstruction Project — the Michigan Department of Transportation’s \$3.3 million project will tentatively close the entire stretch of Main Street from the Clinton River bridge to the Paint Creek bridge from March to October 2012 to make way for a new concrete road.

“Because they are focused on local history education and preservation, they wanted to get more information about our historic information about our historic downtown into people’s hands, and they thought this would be a good way to do it. I agreed. I wanted to be part of it, so that was how the book came about,” she said.

Main Street’s first paved surface was made of brick and was laid in 1916. The brick will again be exposed



when Main Street is reconstructed in 2012, and officials are guessing more stories will appear.

“We are so excited about seeing what is under the sidewalks and the street there,” said Liz Golding of the Rochester Avon Historical Society.

Until then, the community can grab a copy of Larsen’s 56-page soft-cover book, “Remembering Rochester – Main Street Stories,” to learn the tales of Rochester’s Main Street from past to present.

“It’s kind of a tour of Main Street in downtown Rochester, going building by building and giving the history, telling who built it and why, how it’s changed over the years, which businesses have been there, and what’s there now,” she said. “There’s a lot of history down there. We have, I think I counted 21 buildings between Third Street and University Drive that are over 100 years old, so there is quite a bit to tell.”

One of the most interesting stories in the book, according to Larsen, is about the Rollin Sprague Stone Store, known now as Home Bakery, which is the oldest commercial building on Main Street.

“It was built in 1849... but the whole front of the building was rebuilt in 1899, which is why up to the cornice it says 1899. It was restored to that point. Not too long ago we discovered a photo — one of our members had it in her family’s archives — of the building before the 1899 front was put on it. And it was the first one we had ever seen. You can see the cobblestone going all the way to the roofline on the front of the building, which now is covered by the cornice. It was really interesting to see how that building looked in pioneer days, and we have that photo included in the book,” she said.

Larsen’s research for her books involves going back to the newspaper files in some cases, visiting the Register of Deeds office to look at land and mortgage records, and interviewing local residents.

“We’re fortunate to have some people around town who have long memories and know a lot,” she said.

All of the proceeds from the book benefit the Rochester Avon Historical Society, to help fund its local history education and historic preservation activities.

“It’s a charming story going through the streets of a Rochester looking at the different buildings. It gives us a really good idea of how precious this town is,” Golding said.

The book is on sale for \$9 at Lytle’s Pharmacy, Holland’s Floral and Gifts, the Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm, and at the RAHS’s online store at <http://www.rochesteravonhistoricalsociety.org>.

“I think it’s important to know the history of your community to understand what has gone on before, and this book will help with that. Besides that, it’s a nice nostalgia piece. It’s a good way to relive some happy memories,” Larsen said.

You can reach C & G Staff Writer Mary Beth Almond at [malmond@candgnews.com](mailto:malmond@candgnews.com) or at (586)498-1060.

**Source URL:** <http://www.candgnews.com/news/historical-society-releases-book-main-street>