



## The Fight that Made RHS (Briefly) Famous

By Deborah J. Larsen

Most Rochester residents recognize the name Red Knapp from the iconic dairy bar restaurant that he founded on Main Street, but few know that 91 years ago, he was at the center of a sensational controversy at Rochester High School that was covered in newspapers across the country.

Lyle “Red” Knapp was a senior at Rochester High School in February 1931. One day at school, he happened upon a confrontation between principal David G. Millard and another student. Millard was apparently discussing a point of discipline with underclassman Stuart MacDonald, who Millard would later say had given an insolent answer to one of Millard’s questions.

Knapp witnessed Millard slapping McDonald across the face. When Millard moved to strike McDonald a second time, Knapp intervened to separate the two combatants. According to a *Detroit Free Press* account, Knapp told his principal, “It makes me mad all over to see a man your age fighting with a kid. Why don’t you pick on me?” At that point, principal Millard struck Knapp, and a fist fight between the two ensued. The match may have been an uneven one, as Knapp was a star tackle on the Falcon football team, but in any case, newspapers reported that both men came away with bloody lacerations.

The school board promptly stepped in to address the unseemly spectacle of a student and a high school principal engaging in a fist fight, no matter the circumstances. After hearing witness testimony, the board expelled Red Knapp for fighting. The board also noted that it would not renew principal Millard’s contract after the school year closed in June, but the decision on the principal’s contract had been made even before the fight occurred.

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# The President's Message

Welcome to a new season of programs and events for 2022/2023. But first, let's recap what transpired over the summer. In June, RAHS members elected a slate of board member nominees to fill four two-year terms: President, Vice President, Director of Communications, and Director of ERA Newsletter. Per RAHS' by-laws, once members have elected a slate of nominees, the RAHS board votes to determine which nominees fill open positions. I'm pleased to report that all newly elected board members will retain their previous board positions. I will continue as president, Sarah Helferich will continue at vice president, Katie Stozicki remains the director of communications, and Carla Gallusser remains director of the ERA newsletter through 2024.



*Tiffany Dziurman*  
RAHS President

As we move into fall, I want to remind you that your RAHS membership provides you with free entry to the Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm. This perk includes visiting the museum grounds and taking tours of the historic Van Hoosen farmhouse. Entry to special exhibits, programs, and events at the museum is not included in the RAHS membership. But with fall just around the corner, you can enjoy the beautiful and historic landscape of the Rochester Hills Museum in all its fall colors!

RAHS is working on a season filled with unique and fascinating programs for 2022-2023. As noted earlier, this season, RAHS's programs are scheduled differently. We will no longer have both a Brown Bag lunchtime program and an evening Thursday lecture so close together. Evening and lunchtime programs will take place every other month. We open our program season on Thursday, September 8, with a look at the Elmwood Cemetery in Detroit. RAHS member Chris Brown will present. Our Brown Bag lunchtime program begins on Tuesday, October 4 with author Karen Dybis who will talk about the Witch of Delray. See more about these programs on page 5.

We are also working on hosting a tour of Mount Avon Cemetery with a focus on our community's Civil War heritage. Details to come!

Once again, thank you for your membership and support for local history. We appreciate all of our members and we look forward to seeing you this fall!

*Tiffany*

**COVER STORY, CONTINUED...**

Meanwhile, student and public opinion supported Knapp. Students were incensed that Knapp, who was in the final months of his senior year and had been working to pay his own way through high school, would not be allowed to graduate with his class. Out of 250 high school students enrolled, 200 signed a petition demanding Knapp's reinstatement. The number of signatures swelled to 300 after businessmen and citizens also signed the petition, a copy of which was made available for signing at Crissman's drugstore. Students threatened to "empty the rooms" of Rochester High by striking if the expulsion was allowed to stand.



During a student assembly, Knapp publicly apologized to Millard and the two men shook hands. Students thought that the apology signaled a resolution of the debacle, but the school board was not so easily swayed.

The board members initially voted three-to-two in favor of retaining Knapp's expulsion. The majority held that expulsion was necessary to enforce student discipline; two board members believed that the expulsion was an

The pressure, however, was growing. By this point, all three Detroit daily newspapers were covering the story with regular updates. The news wire services then picked it up, and the account of Red Knapp's fight with principal Millard was appearing in newspapers across the United States, under headlines such as "H. S. Principal and Athlete in Fight," and "Pupils Threaten School Strike." The reputations of the high school and the school district were taking a beating, and unrest was swirling in the community.

Five days after the event, the school board relented and revised its original ruling, allowing Knapp to return to class. David Millard ended his ten-year term as principal of Rochester High School at the close of the 1930-31 school year and was largely forgotten. Red Knapp, meanwhile, went on to become a successful businessman, captain of the volunteer fire department, and community leader whose name is easily recognized almost a century after the infamous fight at RHS.



# MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Greetings fellow history lovers,

As you may know, RAHS ended its fiscal year at the end of June and began the membership renewal process. This update is our last-minute reminder to send in your dues. As the days shorten and evening hours grow, it's time to return to the pile of mail sitting stranded somewhere in your house. Dig out the handwritten (less than perfect handwriting, I admit) envelope and set about renewing your membership. If the letter was accidentally tossed, visit our website at [rochesteravonhistoricalsociety.org](http://rochesteravonhistoricalsociety.org).

If you plan on paying with a debit or credit card, renew on our website. If using a check, mail it directly to Richard Dengate at 178 Manor Way, Rochester Hills, MI 48309. Remember to let us know the category: Individual, Household, etc., and if your phone number, home, or email address has changed.

We all know how important our group is to local history preservation. We need your voice to continue helping the historical society educate our community about the importance of historic preservation and local history. Please continue to support our efforts. Renew your membership soon.

Thank You,

Karen M. Lemon  
Membership Director





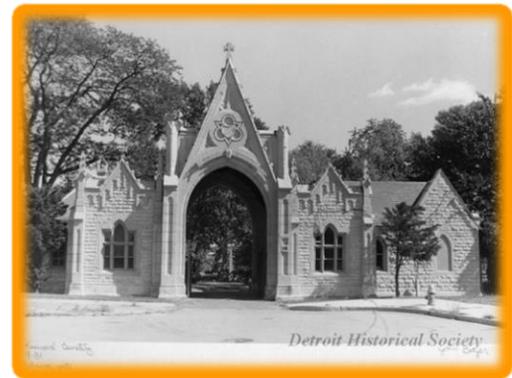
# Upcoming EVENTS



## Stories from Elmwood: Exploring the Past in a Detroit Cemetery

**September 8, 7 - 8:30 p.m.**  
**Rochester Hills Museum (Dairy Barn)**

**Free**



The park-like grounds of Detroit's Elmwood Cemetery provide a unique glimpse into the city's fascinating past. Join RAHS member Chris Brown who will introduce us to the politicians, generals, abolitionists, explorers, businessmen, and everyday figures who repose in this hallowed part of Detroit. Elmwood's "residents" include numerous "conductors" of the Underground Railroad, a 19th century baseball hall-of-famer, the author of the 13th Amendment of the Constitution, a highly decorated Revolutionary War vet who was born a slave, the doctors who led Detroit through two waves of a deadly Cholera epidemic in the 1830s, the German immigrant who started the Stroh's brewery in his basement, the engineer who built the first automobile in the Motor City, and many more. Elmwood's ancient stones have a story to tell, and we are here to tell it. This program is free and open to the public. To register, visit visit: <https://bit.ly/3QUERip>.

*Due to a scheduling conflict at the library, this first lecture program of the season will take place at the museum.*



## The Witch of Delray

**October 4, 12 - 1 p.m.**  
**Rochester Hills Museum (Calf Barn)**

**Free**

Detroit was full of stark contrasts in 1931. Political scandals, rum runners, and mobs lurked in the shadows of the city's soaring architecture and industrious population. As the Great Depression began to take hold, tensions grew, spilling over into the investigation of a mysterious murder at the boardinghouse of Hungarian immigrant Rose Veres. Amid accusations of witchcraft, Rose and her son Bill were convicted of the brutal killing and suspected in a dozen more. Their cries of innocence went unheeded—until one lawyer, determined to seek justice, took on the case. Author Karen Dybis follows the twists and turns of this shocking story, revealing the truth of Detroit's own Hex Woman. Bring a friend and bring your lunch to this free program. Registration is required. To register visit <https://bit.ly/3doAT9k> or call 248-656-4663.

# We will no longer have a history to tell...

## *If we tear down our historic buildings.*

By Karen M. Lemon

Why do people choose to move to Rochester? Often, they are drawn to the historical quaintness. A drive through town is like experiencing time travel. An Opera House, the First National Bank of Detroit, and many other examples of nineteenth-century architecture line Main Street. Sightseeing through town, visitors can see the Rochester Elevator. A large, unique, colorful old grain elevator used to store grains—an impressive reminder of Rochester's agricultural past.

Behind the elevator, follow the sight line north to see the old train depot across the street. Looming south of the elevator is the Western Knitting Mills, a large brick building re-purposed into a lively restaurant and office suites. Visit the lower level of the former Knitting Mill to see the original stone walls painted white. Imagine the flocks of sheep navigating these halls headed to the sheering stations, their wool needed to make the knitted hats and gloves produced at the mill. Today, Rochester citizens can appreciate this incredible building which some claimed was "too far gone to save." Thankfully the building was spared the wrecking ball in the 1990s because wiser minds prevailed.

Just south of the mill building is a parking lot. In the nineteenth century, three barn-shaped rooming houses stood there for the mill employees. These included mostly single women recruited from Royal Oak. Had at least one of the rooming houses survived, it would have been an ideal opportunity to experience the living conditions for these young women who broke traditional norms by seeking work outside of the home.

Today Rochester is facing another challenging and defining moment as the Rochester Community Schools moves out of the administrative building on West University Drive. This property site has been used for educational purposes since 1847.

When local citizens were clamoring for higher education opportunities, including the Van Hoosen sisters, Bertha and Alice, the Rochester Lyceum Academy was built on this property. After it burned down in 1888, the Avon district built the Harrison Building in 1889 as its first high school. This structure has been renovated over the years to accommodate elementary and middle school students to become the blended building it is today. Built during a time when every schoolhouse was a school district, this building was Avon #5.

With all its history, this building can be re-purposed into a city center or arts building; ideas and possibilities are endless. A lack of communication and imagination can only hamper a solution for saving the building.

We cannot be shocked if historic structures are razed without public input. In 1968, the Charles Sherwin Chapman Estate, known as "Oak Bluff," was razed by a developer without public awareness, outraging the citizens of Rochester. The Chapman home, designed by the famous architect Albert Kahn, was located across from St. Philip's Episcopal Church on Main Street and it was worth saving.

The Rochester-Avon Historical society's mission is to preserve local history. It's up to us and our community partners to make sure we make strides in preserving the community's heritage.

Join us on Facebook, Instagram, and as society members to help us continue our mission and spread the word about our work.

# In Memory...



**June Mabel Hopaluk**

June 1, 1937 ~ August 10, 2022

RAHS is sad to share the news that June Hopaluk passed away on August 10, 2022. June was an avid supporter of local history, having served on the Rochester Historical Commission and on the board for the Rochester-Avon Historical Society. June will be greatly missed.

~

Hopaluk, June Mabel, age 85 of Rochester. Loving mother of Clinton Hopaluk, the late James Hopaluk, John (Theresa) Hopaluk and Patricia Hopaluk, cherished grandmother of Adam (Haley), Tad (Tabatha), Amanda, Lauren (Dan), Claire (Ethan), Jack, Noah, Anna, Graham, great grandmother of Corrie, Jamison, Juliann, Westen, Maizee, Sienna, Brynlee, Bret, Remy and Ace, sister of the late Norma (the late Gordan) Harding, Betty (John) LeSage, the late Tim (the late Carol) Golding, Linda Golding (Chris Williams), and Judy (Gary) Miller.

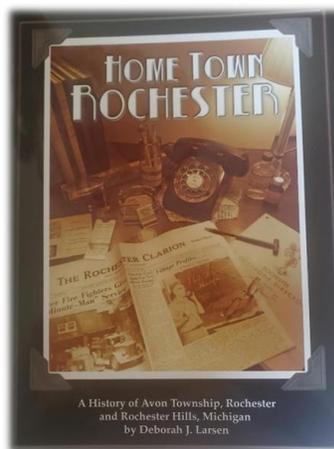
## RAHS Merchandise

*Purchase at [rochesteravonhistoricalsociety.org](http://rochesteravonhistoricalsociety.org) or find select items at the Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm and Lytle Pharmacy.*



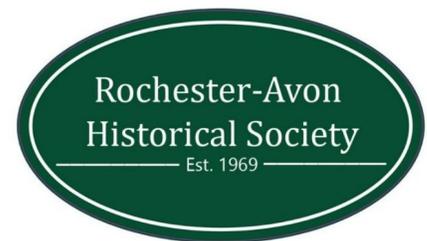
**History in the Heart of the Hills:  
A Rochester Area Heritage Tour (Book)**

**\$10.00**



**Hometown Rochester (Book)**

**\$10.00**



**RAHS Car Decal**

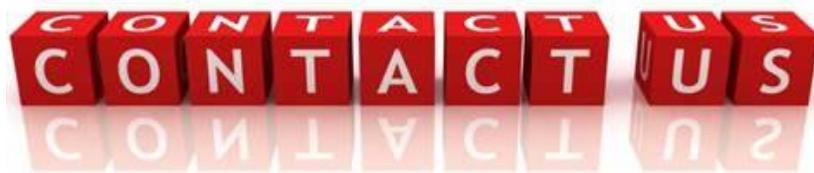
**\$6.00**



To contact us, call (248) 656-5440 or email to rahsupdates@gmail.com

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

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

- NEW
- RENEWAL
- \$18 Student – Currently enrolled in secondary or post-secondary educational institution.
- \$25 Individual – Person interested in local history.
- \$45 Household – Includes immediate family members living in the same household.
- \$125 Business/Sponsor – Designed for community businesses and individuals with a desire to promote the restoration and promotion of local history.
- \$250 Lifetime – Perpetual membership for those who wish to make a long-term commitment to the preservation of local history



- Annual Picnic
- Antique Appraisal Day
- Historic Research
- Fundraising
- Genealogy Research
- Heritage Days
- Oral History
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- Historic Walking Tour Guide/Assistant
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- Refreshments at Meetings
- Special Project Volunteer
- Web Site/Multimedia
- Volunteer Interests/Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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Mail completed form to RAHS, P.O. Box 80783, Rochester, MI 48308-0783 or <https://www.rochesteravonhistoricalsociety.org/product/membership/>

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