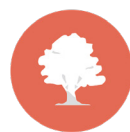




Washington Ave
(ROHS 1956)

Annual Report

2024



Royal Oak
**HISTORIC DISTRICT
STUDY COMMITTEE**



Royal Oak

**HISTORIC DISTRICT
STUDY COMMITTEE**

Annual Report

Mission:

To establish an Historic District Study Committee and provide for the establishment of historic districts in carrying out the public purpose of historic preservation in the City of Royal Oak, consistent with the State of Michigan Local Historic Districts Act, MCLA § 399.201 et seq., as amended.

To safeguard the heritage of the City of Royal Oak by preserving historic districts in the City that reflect elements of the City's history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture;

To stabilize and improve property values in each district and the surrounding areas;

To foster civic beauty;

To strengthen the local economy; and

To promote the use of historic districts for the education, pleasure, and welfare of the citizens of the City of Royal Oak and the State of Michigan.

KENT

JEWELERS • OPTICIANS

8 - JEWELERS - KENT - OPTICIANS - 308



Kent Jewelers
308 West Fourth Street
(ROHS undated)

Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee

202 S. Troy Street
Royal Oak, MI 48067

March 1, 2025

Historic District Study Committee Members

January election of officers:

Tammis Donaldson - Chairperson

Chris Kraska - Vice Chairperson & Researcher

Leslie Snow - Secretary

Patrick Andras - Treasurer

Jeff Ridley - Marketing

Eric Romain - Researcher

Vasilios Derdelakos - Designer

Carol Schwanger - HDSC city liaison

With Special Thanks

Royal Oak City Commission.

National Alliance of Preservation Commissions
(NAPC).

Michigan State Historic Preservation Office
(SHPO).

The many volunteers and citizens who share
the passion for historic preservation.

Goals

2024

The Historic District Study Committee worked on four primary goals in 2024.

1 **Gain approval of Historic Designation for the Vinsetta Bridges District.**

The Royal Oak City Commission approved the Vinsetta Bridges Historic District on March 11, 2024.

2 **Expand Community Outreach by collaborating with the Historic District Committee**

Jointly administered by the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the National Park Service (NPS), the CLG program provides an effective framework for promoting, supporting, and enhancing historic preservation activities at the local level. Through the program, communities' partner with SHPO to plan for, protect, and tell the story of important historic places. In exchange, they gain access to specialized technical assistance, exclusive grant funding opportunities, and other benefits that help them meet their goals.

May 2022 the city of Royal Oak became a (CLG)

SHPO has been on call for any historic preservation questions we have.

Grant goals;

Vinsetta Bridges; grant for Historic Structure report & repair

Orson Starr house; grant for national historic designation

3

Develop the Vinsetta Bridges Task Force.

Comprised of HDSC and HDC members the VBTF worked to find solutions to slow the deterioration of the existing bridges and prepare a plan for their future restoration work

4

Engage in the new Historic Context Report.

The HDSC worked hand in hand with the team at Chronicle Heritage in the preparation of the new Historic Context Report for the City. The HDSC was able to provide critical information to the research team as well as guide the team in providing a report that best serves the City and future research.



**Streetcar near the northwestern
corner of Fourth and Main streets
(ROHS 1915)**





**View of the Oak Drive-In Theatre screen
2916 Normandy Road, not extant
(Water Winter Wonderland 1980)**





1916 advertisement for the Vinsetta Park subdivision, The Detroit News

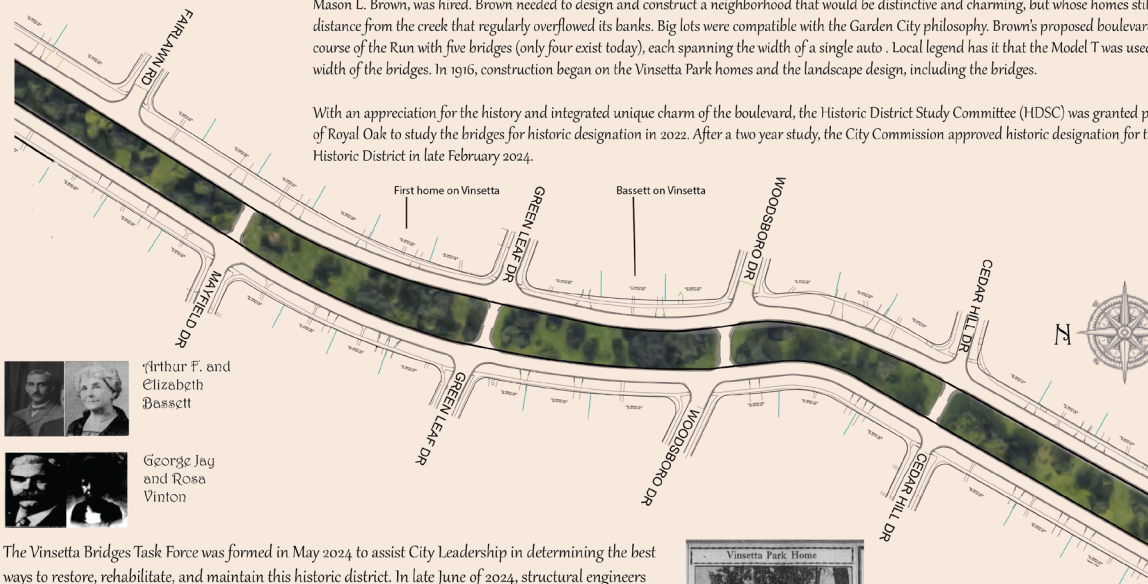
To read the full report visit:
<https://www.romi.gov/DocumentCenter/View/35663/Vinsetta-Bridges-Preliminary-Study-Report--APRIL-25-2023>
 Or scan with your mobile device:



As the Royal Oak population grew in the early 1900s, spurred by the pattern of development along the Woodward corridor north of Detroit, good friends and business partners Arthur Bassett and George Jay Vinton drew their attention to Royal Oak's housing needs. The entity known as the "Vinsetta Land Company" was created in 1915. The first reference to "Vinsetta" in the press was in 1907. Local legend has it that their wives had suggested George Jay's "Vin-" merge with Arthur's "-sett-" to form this new word. In 1904, a 150 acre tract of land was acquired. This lovely little river valley had as its centerpiece what was then called "Red Run Creek" or "Little Run."

Undoubtedly influenced by the movements of their time, the residential design of the new development incorporated aesthetic and landscape elements from the Garden City Movement. This movement envisioned a landscape of curving streets, irregular lots, reduced population density, and much green space, as a rejection of the grid patterned streets and "crowded, unhealthy cities" of the era's Progressive Movement. To implement this vision, a trained landscape architect and civil engineer, Mason L. Brown, was hired. Brown needed to design and construct a neighborhood that would be distinctive and charming, but whose homes still kept a respectful distance from the creek that regularly overflowed its banks. Big lots were compatible with the Garden City philosophy. Brown's proposed boulevard would follow the course of the Run with five bridges (only four exist today), each spanning the width of a single auto. Local legend has it that the Model T was used to determine the width of the bridges. In 1916, construction began on the Vinsetta Park homes and the landscape design, including the bridges.

With an appreciation for the history and integrated unique charm of the boulevard, the Historic District Study Committee (HDSC) was granted permission by the City of Royal Oak to study the bridges for historic designation in 2022. After a two year study, the City Commission approved historic designation for the Vinsetta Bridges Historic District in late February 2024.



Arthur F. and Elizabeth Bassett



George Jay and Rosa Vinton

The Vinsetta Bridges Task Force was formed in May 2024 to assist City Leadership in determining the best ways to restore, rehabilitate, and maintain this historic district. In late June of 2024, structural engineers were engaged to take 3-D scans of the bridges to determine their current integrity and create the basis of information for future restoration efforts. The Task Force will engage district adjacent residents, historic structural experts, state and federal Historic Departments, and the greater community to formulate recommendations for the restoration and maintenance of these local treasures.

Contact the Vinsetta Bridges Task Force at carols@ROMI.org with any feedback, comments, or historic photos.



1923 photo of one Vinsetta bridge with home in the background, The Detroit News



Bridge #1 at Mayfield Drive and Vinsetta Boulevard, photo by Eric Romain, 2022



Bridge #2 at Greenleaf Drive and Vinsetta Boulevard, photo by Eric Romain, 2022



Bridge #3 at Woodsboro Drive and Vinsetta Boulevard, photo by Eric Romain, 2022



Bridge #4 at Cedar Hill Drive and Vinsetta Boulevard, photo by Eric Romain, 2022

**An early view south down
Woodward Avenue
from 13 Mile Road
(ROHS undated))**



Goals

2025

The Historic District Study Committee wants to work on four primary goals in 2025.

1 Complete City of Royal Oak Historic Context Report.

Provide support to Chronicle Heritage in the preparation of the issuance of the Historic Context Report.

2 Test and repair the Mayfield Bridge in the Vinsetta Bridges Historic District.

Raise funds to solicit work for non destructive testing to verify the structural conditions of the bridges and prepare for the repair of the bridge on Mayfield Drive.

3 Catalog lost structures for future reference.

Develop and implement a strategy that documents lost structures that have historic significance in Royal Oak.

4 Select a research project for historic designation.

Continue to research historic districts for the purpose of preserving the rich history of Royal Oak.

Proposed New Projects; letters have been created with fun facts about the building and to find out if the owners would be interested in the first step; a historic district study report.



Royal Oak

**HISTORIC DISTRICT
STUDY COMMITTEE**