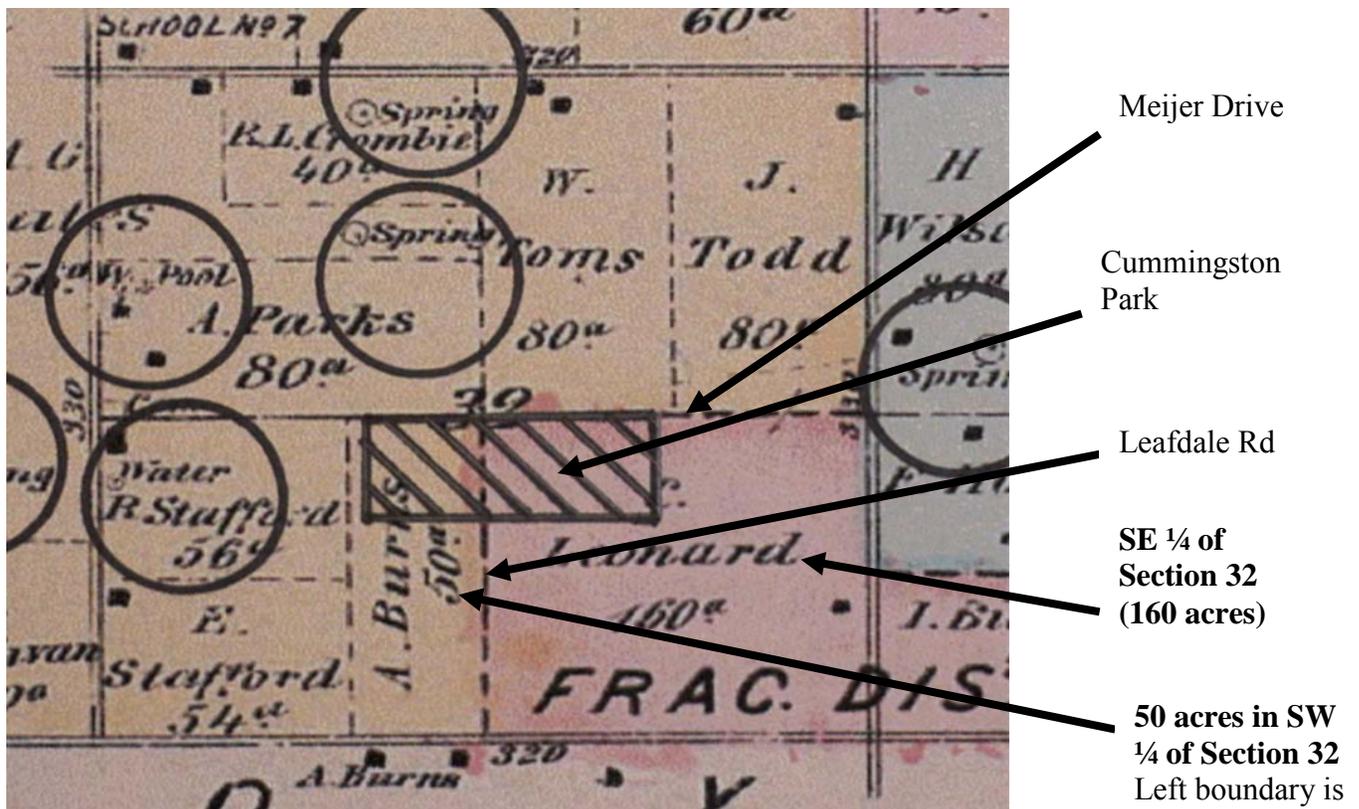


# HISTORY OF A PIECE OF LAND IN NORTHERN ROYAL OAK: CUMMINGSTON PARK

By Ted Vickers 2016



1872 Survey Map of Cummingston Park area: The double lines represent Coolidge on the left, 14 Mile Rd on the bottom, Crooks Rd on the right and 15 Mile Rd at the top. The circles represent springs.

The following pages cover the history of the land that now includes Cummingston Park Nature Area. That land includes SE 1/4 and 50 acres of SW 1/4 of Section 32 of Troy Township. See above for a map location of those 2 sections. See [link](#) for 1872, 1896, 1906 and 1916 survey maps of the Cummingston area.

## SE 1/4 (160 ACRES) of TROY TWP SECTION 32

**1823: Josiah Alger purchased the entire section (160 acres) on October 22, 1823 from the United States of America.**

Josiah Alger was born in Uxbridge, Massachusetts on June 3, 1782. His father was John Alger (1740-1800) and mother was Elizabeth Humes (b.1746). They were married June, 1773 and had 6 children. Josiah's father was a Revolutionary War soldier from Massachusetts. In 1793, the family moved to West Bloomfield, Ontario, New York where Josiah's father was a blacksmith.

Josiah Alger married Esther Scovel (1785-1843) in 1803. They had 9 children. Josiah was Pvt, 46 New York Militia, during the War of 1812.

In 1823, Josiah, his family and his twin brother, Ira, moved to Michigan. Josiah was a good friend of Cromwell Goodwin back in Ontario County, New York. When Cromwell Goodwin moved to Royal Oak Township in 1824, they lived less than a mile apart.

Josiah moved to Genesee County, Michigan in 1836. He became a justice of the peace in 1837. Josiah died March 6, 1852.

**1836: Mason I. James purchased entire the section (160 acres) from Josiah Alger on April 8.**

Mason I. James was born at Truxton, Courtland County, New York on December 16, 1802. He married Amanda Davis (1804-1886) on January 24, 1822. Their daughter, Charlotte, was born around 1831.

Mason came to Michigan in 1824, locating in the town of Avon. He moved to Southfield, in 1828. He remained there until the fall of 1835, when he moved to Troy Corners (Livernois, south of Square Lake Rd), where he engaged in the mercantile business. He sold this business after a few months, and in the spring of 1836 bought the Josiah Alger farm. He lived there until 1856, when he sold the farm and moved to Birmingham, Michigan. He lived there until the fall of 1884, when he went to Chicago, Ill., to reside with his daughter, Charlotte (Mrs. J. W. Toms). He remained there until his death on September 20, 1886, at the age of 84.

Mason was commissioned by Gov. Stevens T. Mason as a cornet on May 15, 1832. His company was ordered into service in the Black Hawk war. On November 11, 1835, he was commissioned captain in the 2<sup>nd</sup> division, 3<sup>rd</sup> brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> regiment, and served in the Toledo War. He also held the office of justice of the peace.

**1865: Charles Leonard purchased this section (160 acres) from Mason I. James on December 8**

Charles Leonard was born October 2, 1828 and died in 1880. He was a farmer per the 1860 census. He married Esther Starr Leonard (born around 1831) who was from Ohio. Esther was the daughter of Orson and Rhoda Starr of Royal Oak. They had a son, Mason (born around 1856). In 1870, Chauncy Burns (born around 1851 and the son of Abram Burns), worked for Charles Leonard.

**1873: William Marcus Hall purchased this section (160 acres) from Charles Leonard on November 18**

**SW ¼ of TROY TWP SECTION 32**

**1827: Michael Pearsall received land patent for the E ½ of this section (80 acres) from the United States of America on August 17**

**1828: J. Phillips bought this E ½ (80 acres) section from M. Pearsall**

**1832: Abram Burns bought 50 acres of the E ½ of SW ¼ on November 19, 1832**

Abram Burns was born in Vermont around 1800. His wife, Hannah, was born around 1807. Their children included Abram Jr. born in New York around 1822, John W. born around 1837 and Chauncy born around 1852. In 1857, a survey map shows Abram also owning property south of section 32 (Royal Oak Township) where he kept his residence. In 1870, Abram Jr. was

still living with his father. Hannah was no longer listed in the census. Abram continues to own those 50 acres until nearly 1880. Abram was not listed on the 1880 United States census.

**1881: On January 10, William Marcus Hall purchases this land (50 acres).**

**SW ¼ (EAST 50 ACRES) and SE ¼ of TROY TWP SECTION 32**

**1881: William Marcus Hall now owns all of the land (210 acres) which includes present day Cummingston Park**

William Marcus Hall was born in Ontario County, New York on June 24, 1839. He moved to Michigan in 1847 with his parents who settled in Macomb County. He is a son of Horace and Abigail (Abbey) Hall, both natives of New York. )

William married Rebecca Angeline Rose (1840-1930) on Dec 31, 1867. Rebecca was daughter of Joseph Leonard Rose and Charlotte (Bailey) Rose. Rebecca was born in Brandon Township, Oakland County, Michigan.

In 1874, William Hall located in Troy Township, Oakland County. He is one of the large land owners of Oakland County. His family resides on a 158 acre farm of in section 33 (just east of section 32) in Troy Township. He also owns 210 acres in section 32, Troy Township.

William and Rebecca had a daughter, Charlotte Bell (Lottie) Hall. She was born February 10, 1872.

William Marcus Hall died in Troy, Michigan on July 17, 1909.

In 1911, Rebecca Hall rented her farm to William Hamm of Troy. Rebecca then moved in with her daughter and son-in-law in the house on the west side of Crooks Road. Rebecca Hall died May, 1930.

**1900: In that year, Percival Parmenter and Charlotte (Hall) Parmenter moved onto the 210 acres farm in section 32 in Troy Township and owned by Charlotte's parents.**

Charlotte Bell (Lottie) Hall married Percival Parmenter on August 26, 1897 in Troy, Michigan, at the home of William and Rebecca Hall, the bride's parents.

Percival Willoughby Parmenter was born November 25, 1872 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and died November 19, 1945 in Troy, Michigan. William and Mary Parmenter were Percival's parents. Percy was one of 11 children. When he was 9, his family lived in Detroit for awhile and then returned to Toronto when he was 14. While visiting in Birmingham, he met Charlotte Hall.

Percival went to Toronto Business College in 1895.

After the wedding, Percy and Charlotte they made their home in Toronto, where Percy had an excellent position in a large wholesale house. The Parmenters returned from Toronto sometime around March, 1900. Charlotte's father had made extensive repairs to the farm on section 32 so that Charlotte and Percy could move in there.

Before her marriage, Mrs. Parmenter was a successful teacher of music and was a popular reader. Charlotte was the Director of the Baptist Children's Home at 13 Mile Road and Greenfield. Lottie and Percival had three daughters and one son, Walter. Walter was adopted from the Baptist

Children's Home when he was 12 years old. He was born on May 9, 1896 in Pontiac, Michigan and died in 1990. Other children were Martha (b.1899 in Toronto, Ontario), Ida Alvenia Parmenter (b.1901) and Jean Willowbell Parmenter (b.1904). See [link](#) for a family photo.

The Parmeter's farm residence called "High Breeze" (located at Crooks and 14 Mile Rd) burned down in March of 1903. In July, 1908, the Parmenter's barns, other outbuildings and crops were destroyed by fire.

"P.W. Parmenter was the chairman of the County Dry Commission and a member of the First Baptist Church.

According to land records in 1913, Charlotte Parmenter and Rebecca Hall sold the right of way to Imperial Oil for the laying, maintaining, operating, removing pipelines and telephone lines.

After selling land to George Cummings, the Parmenters lived on a five acre lot just north of 14 Mile Road on the west side of Crooks. In November, 1919, Percival and Lottie moved to 307 Brown St., located at the SE corner of W. Brown and Pierce in Birmingham.

Around 1920, Walter Parmenter, Percy's son, convinced Percy to join him in running a greenhouse enterprise located on the site of the old farm off of Crooks. Walter ran the greenhouse and Percy handled the business located at 122 S. Main Street in Royal Oak. Later on, Percival owned the "Parmenter Florist" located at 159 West Maple, Birmingham, Michigan in partnership with his son, Walter H. Parmenter.

In later years, Percy and Lottie moved back to 4925 Crooks Road, just north of 14 Mile Road on the west side of Crooks.

In January of 1936, fire destroyed the Parmenter Company's greenhouse and other buildings.

Percival Willoughby Parmenter died at his home at 3925 Crooks on November 19, 1945 after a lingering illness. Charlotte Bell (Lottie) Hall, died January 24, 1948.

**1916: Per a survey map, George H. Cummings owned 315 acres from Crooks to a road now known as Coolidge, 14 Mile Rd to section line ½ mile north of 14 Mile Rd.** Information was compiled from recorded deeds, plats, tax maps, surveys and other public records and data.

George H. Cummings was born near the family's homestead in Goodrich, Michigan on September 7, 1855. His parents were Lewis and Martha (Pender) Cummings. They had five children which also included his sister Nellie G. Cummings who married Ellis S. Rockafellow.

In 1887, George H Cummings married Sarah Mott in Genesee County, Michigan.

George lived the first part of his life around Flint. He lived his last 25 years in the Detroit area. He made his money in manufacturing (Detroit Rack Company) and real estate.

Just prior to his death, George sold Detroit Rack so he could focus on his real estate interests. His accumulated estate went to an endowment for a home for crippled children.

George H. Cummings died June 7, 1920 at the age of 64. His remains were sent back to his home town of Goodrich for burial.

- 1924:** On December 6, 160 acres in SE ¼ of Section 32 and 50 acres of east half of SW ¼ of Section 32 was surveyed, laid out and platted as subdivision. The plat was approved by the Township Board of Troy Township on December 6, 1925. See [link](#) for 1924 plat map and document. Platted land's boundaries were east/west section line halfway between 14 and 15 Mile Rd. Crooks, 14 Mile Rd and a north/south section line about 150 feet west of Delemere Road.
- 1924:** On December 15, an Oakland County Court case was settled between Caspar J. Lingeman (real estate salesman) and both Nellie G. Rockafellow and Harold H. Emmons, Executriz and Executor of the last will and testament of George H. Cummings. It was decreed that George Cummings' (died in 1920) property which included all of S ½ of Section 32 except for 5 acres belonging to the Parmenters, was sold to Caspar Lingeman.
- 1924:** On December 30, Casper J. Lingeman sells 212 acres (SE ¼ of Section 32 and the east 50 acres of SW ¼ of Section 32) to Harold H. Emmons (the Executor of George H. Cummings estate).
- 1925:** Five acres bounded by Leafdale, Langley Ct., Mansfield and Torquay was dedicated as Cummingston Park.
- 1927:** City of Royal Oak annexed Cummingston from Troy Twp on November 8.
- 1933:** George Cummings Foundation now owns about 96% of the land in the south half of Section 32. The boundaries include Coolidge, east/west section line half-way between 14 and 15 Mile Rd, Crooks Rd and 14 Mile Rd.
- 1954:** Ray Safronoff helped discover and plot the Cummingston area while a student at Albion College. Later on he became a Royal Oak school teacher. He created a Cummingston Plant and Trail Map. See [link](#) for map.
- 1955:** City of Royal Oak Park Sites report prepared in 1955 mentioned 5 acres obtained January, 1914, and dedicated in 1925 (Site #1). Boundaries were Leafdale, Park Ct, Mansfield and Torquay. Also mentioned in the report was an unnamed 18.56 acres of land (Site #2) included in an area surrounded by Cummingston Park on the west, north and east side and extends to the City limits on the north. Both areas (5 acres and 18.56 acres) are completely undeveloped. They are heavily wooded with considerable brush. The drainage is poor and roads leading to the area are unimproved. See [link](#) for a description and map of Sites #1 & #2. There were 10 lots between Elmhurst and Delemere that were not owned by the city in 1955. The city had recommended swapping city property east of Elmhurst and west of Delemere for those 10 lots.
- 1955:** From the mid-Fifties through the Sixties, Cummingston was used widely by schools in Royal Oak as well as neighboring communities for nature study classes.
- 1956:** Site #1 was officially named Cummingston Park on July 30, 1956 by the City of Royal Oak. There was an archery range on site that was maintained by the Royal Oak Archery Association and open to the public.
- 1959:** The Cummingston Park area was brought to the attention of the Royal Oak Branch of the Women's National Farm and Garden Association, who were urged to preserve this natural, unspoiled area which has, among other wildflowers, five varieties of Trillium. Led by Mrs. Ray Ayer, the Farm and Garden Association enlisted the support of the Girl Scouts, the Boy Scouts, the City's Parks and Grounds Department and the City's Recreation Department in preserving this area as an untouched woodland, as well as laying trails, and labeling both trees and wildflowers.
- 1960:** In the 1960's Wayne State University had an entire botany course taught in the nature area. The Michigan Botanical Society and the Detroit Photographic Club had many field trips to the area. The Michigan State University Botany Department said, "Cummingston Park contained the richest wild flower area in this part of Michigan". The Royal Oak Garden Club protected and nourished the park during this time.
- 1960:** Up thru the early 1960's, Johnson Creek, a tributary of Red Run, was still flowing where Parmenter Road is today. The Run still contained fish and provided natural drainage for the park.

- 1963:** On March 5, the Royal Oak City Commission dedicated 12 acres of city owned land to Cummingston Park. That made 17 acres (12 + 5 acres previously dedicated) total of dedicated park land and about 6 ½ acres that were still undedicated. Two lots in this undedicated parcel were still privately owned.
- 1965:** The City of Royal Oak published pamphlet “[Treasury of Wildflowers](#)” that is about a piece of land named Cummingston Park. The park is bounded by Torquay, Elmhurst, and Delemere. See [link](#) for a map of Cummingston Park in 1965. Included in the pamphlet is a 1965 Cummingston Plant and Trail map produced by M. Ayer. It mentions Royal Oak’s Master Plan where 19 acres were to be designed for a Community Special Area “Nature Trails” and the remaining four acres were to be developed as a neighborhood playground.
- 1970:** Sometime around 1970, a fence was constructed around an area bounded by Torquay, Delemere, Royal Oak’s Northern border, and the eastern border located just west of Mansfield. That area became Cummingston’s Nature Area.
- 1975:** Cummingston Park now consists of about 30 plus acres of parkland. See [link](#) for map of Cummingston Park in 1975.
- 1977:** Playground was built in southeast section of Cummingston Park.
- 1983:** City of Royal Oak documents stated that Cummingston needed drainage to protect the trees (due to the increased development in the area). However, drainage was never installed. There were many trees in distress and there were few saplings because of drainage problems in the park.
- 1985:** In September, the property west of Cummingston Park was for sale by the South Oakland Water Authority, but the City did not choose to purchase the additional land.

To see how the Cummingston Park area began to change starting in the in the mid 1950’s, see [link](#) for aerial maps 1949, 1956, 1967 and the present day.

If you know of any additional information about the history of the area that includes Cummingston Park, we would appreciate it if you could let us know by e-mailing the information to us ([naturesociety@romi.gov](mailto:naturesociety@romi.gov)). Also, let us know if you think that there should be any corrections made to this report.

#### WORKS SITED:

*County History in Genesee Co. MI. 1879)*  
*Ontario County NY GenWeb Queries Surnames A - D*  
*History of Oakland County 1877, Troy Twp Section located in Troy Museum*  
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*RO Parks and Recreation February 1969*  
*Birmingham Eccentric*  
*Royal Oak Parks and Recreation*  
*Royal Oak Daily Tribune*  
*Descendants of Nathaniel Hall*  
*Collections of the Michigan Pioneer and State Historical Society, Volume 11*  
*History of Oakland County by Thaddeus D. Seeley p. 253*  
*1857 info from Troy 1800’s Owners and section*  
*Troy Twp Section: History of Oakland County 1877*  
*City of Royal Oak Sites prepared in 1955*  
*City of Detroit p.885 (George H. Cummings)*