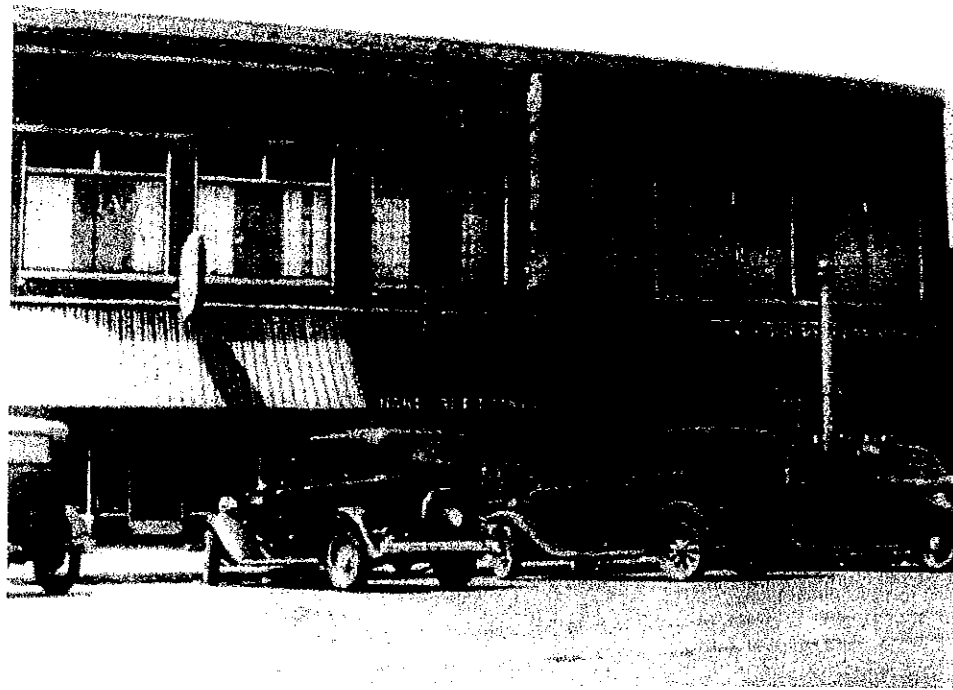


# **Hilzinger Block Building**

**Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee**

## **Final Report**



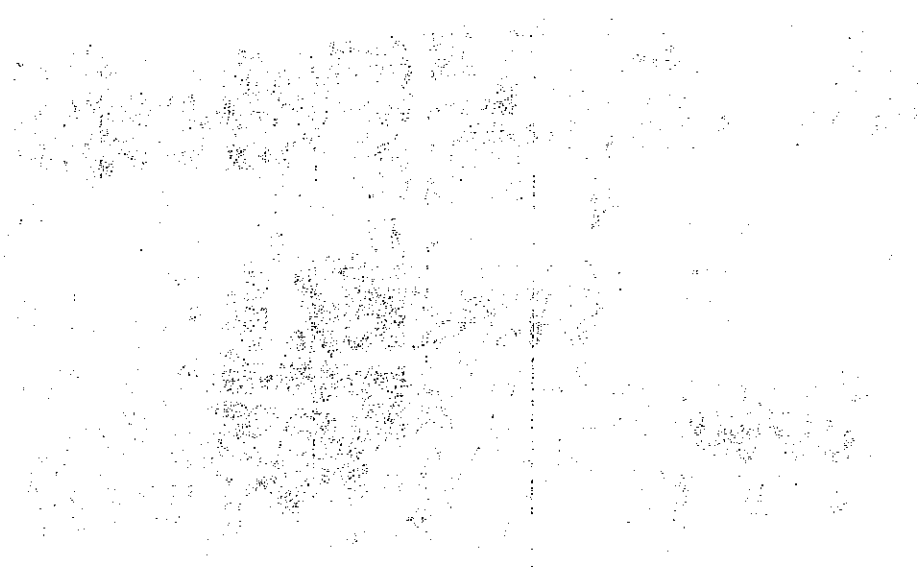
**Compiled by:**  
**Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee**  
**with preliminary text by**  
**Lloyd Baldwin, historian, Eastern Michigan University**

**December 16, 2003**

Walter Dill Scott

Journal of Applied Psychology

Final Report



Submitted by:

Walter Dill Scott, Director, Committee

on the Psychology of the

University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

December 1927

## **Hilzinger Block Building**

### **Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee Final Report**

**December 16, 2003**

By ordinance dated December 19, 1994 the Royal Oak City Commission established the Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee in accordance with Michigan's Local Historic Districts Act, Public Act 169 (1970), as amended.

This proposed historic district consists of a ***Hilzinger Block Building*** located at 106-110 South Main Street in the downtown Royal Oak, Michigan.

#### **Boundaries**

The property consists of one building in block 3 in Section 21, Royal Oak Township. The property is designated by Sidwell Number 25-21-231-013. It is located in the E ½ of the N.E. ¼ of Section 21, T.1N. R.11E. Royal Oak Township. The building is located in the Central Business District of the City of Royal Oak on the west side of Main Street 60' south of Eleven Mile Road. [Map #7, page 31 and Photograph #32, page 32].

The City of Royal Oak Legal Description of Property shows:

Assessor's Plat No. 20 South  
0.30 feet of East 49.5 feet of  
Lot 1 of Lot 4, excluding the  
North 2 feet of the East 29 feet  
Of the West 60.5 of S.D. Lot 4.

Assessor's Plat No. 20  
Lot 4; Blk. 3  
25-21-231-013

#### **Verbal Boundary Description**

Lot 4 of Block 3, Original Plat of the Village of Royal Oak, Oakland County, Michigan, commonly known as the Hilzinger Block, consisting of numbers 106, 108, and 110 South Main Street, City of Royal Oak, Oakland County, Michigan. The north boundary being the line separating lot 4 and lot 1, the west boundary being the east line of the north-south running municipal alley, the south boundary is the line dividing lot 4 from 5, the east boundary being the east edge of the public sidewalk.

### **Boundary Justification**

The described boundaries comprise the legal limits of the lot containing the subject Hilzinger Block and the front (east) and rear (west) sidewalks serving the building's front and rear entrances. Lot 4 is historically associated with a multiple lot holding in Block 3 of the Original Plat of the Village of Royal Oak owned by Phillip Storz and later his son-in-law, William Hilzinger, resulting in a land tenure that lasted from circa 1860 to 2001.

The 106-110 South Main is an anchor property in the proposed Hilzinger Block Historic District as a building representative of Royal Oak's post World War I development boom and its association with the Hilzinger family. Surrounding buildings exhibit non-historic and post-modernist approaches to rehabilitation while the Hilzinger Building expresses strong architectural integrity and is representative of Royal Oak commercial architecture in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

The boundary justification for the district may be further justified in terms of the history, geography and/or the integrity of the resource. This historic district is distinguishable from its surrounding resources and stands on its own merit. The sections of Historical Significance, Property History and Architectural Description that follow delineates the justification. Let it be said that the involvement of the Hilzinger Family and the early offices of Minoru Yamasaki are sufficient in themselves to allow the historic district to distinguish it from the surrounding resources and fully qualifies it to stand on its own merit. In addition the architecture of this original Main Street façade is typical early twentieth century modern in use of brick patterns and limestone detailing and the other elements maintain the unique appearance that buildings of that period were defined. This is the only building in the block that maintains the external appearance from the era of the 1920s. The request by the developer to have this property designated as a historic district may inspire other property owners to seek designation and help to create a larger district at the north end of the business district.

### **Percentage of Historic and Non-Historic Resources**

The percentage for historic resource is one-hundred percent (100%) to zero percent (0%) for non-historic resources. There are no other historic or non-historic contributing resources in this proposed historic district. There are no outbuildings, structures or landscape features that should be included in this count.

### **Charge of the Study Committee**

The Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee is charged with the mission of identifying, researching and studying potential historic sites and districts within the City of Royal Oak. The research results are reported to the City and State in compliance with Michigan's Local Historic Districts Act PA 169 of 1970 (as amended 1992).

### **Members of the Study Committee**

Mark J McBride

Chair, Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee

Architect

Member, Royal Oak Historic District Commission

McBride STUDIO, inc. Architecture, Studio Director, Royal Oak, Michigan

Ruth G. Cleaveland

Vice-chair, Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee

Chair, Royal Oak Historic District Commission

Roundtable of Royal Oak Historical Organizations

Robert R. Duchene

Secretary, Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee

Teacher, United States History

Patricia A. Franz

Technical writer and logistician

Lifelong resident of the City of Royal Oak

Adelene Hoey

Employee of Royal Oak William Beaumont Hospital

35-year resident of the City of Royal Oak

Owen A. Perkins

Past-president, past Coordinator of Historical Research; Royal Oak Historical Society, and current Board of Directors

Past Chairperson, Royal Oak Historical Commission

Historian, Roundtable of Royal Oak Historical Organizations

Erik Tungate

Member, Main Street Oakland County Business Development Committee

Chair, Recruitment Sub-committee

Member, Retention Sub-committee and

Sr. Financial Analyst, Comerica Bank, Detroit, Michigan

### **Historical Significance**

Royal Oak traces its beginnings to the early years of the republic and the years preceding the opening of the Erie Canal. In 1819 a road was extended from Detroit that followed the Military Road and the Saginaw Indian Trail to a point 12 miles north of Detroit, coming to a large oak tree previously marked with an "H" by surveyor Horatio Ball and then westerly until it joined Main Street in Pontiac. The township derived its name from this "royal oak" as referenced by the Territorial Governor Cass.

In 1832 Town one was set-aside as Royal Oak Township [Map #1, page 25]. The plat straddled the northeast quarter of section twenty-one and the northwest quarter of section twenty-two. The Village of Royal Oak was laid out in 1836 and formally platted in 1838 by Sherman Stevens. Stevens purchased lands from Joseph Parshall that included about 80 acres. Bound by First Street (Eleven Mile Road) on the north, West Street on the west, Eighth Street (Lincoln Avenue) on the south and Troy Street on the east, the plat contained forty-two blocks and comprises most of the current downtown business district [Map #2, page 26].

The importance of the railroad was central to the early development of Royal Oak. As a station on the railroad, Royal Oak took on a special significance. With the boom in population during the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, numerous commercial endeavors soon arrived. Stevens was the promoter and one of the main stockholders of the first railroad to be incorporated in the State of Michigan. The railroad terminus reached Royal Oak in 1838.

The Civil War saw many area men volunteering to defend the Union. The village did its best to support the efforts, including rare cooperation between competitors. An example of this was Phillip Storz and George Erb, local shoe and boot makers. Storz opened his shop in 1854 and Erb in 1856. These two men agreed to make certain the soldiers had sturdy boots whenever needed.

By 1877 the village commercial community consisted of the railroad, a steam sawmill, three blacksmith shops, one hotel, three general stores, a milliner, two druggists, and two doctors. In addition there were four churches, the town hall, the District Six schoolhouse and Reverend George Owen's short-lived newspaper, the Royal Oak Experiment.

Growth remained slow in the village. In 1900 the population was 488, only 200 more than in 1860. Thaddeus D. Seeley, in his History of Oakland County, Michigan, 1912, described Royal Oak as being primarily a residential community, the largest businesses on Main Street being J. M. Lawson Lumber and Coal Company and Mellen-Wright Lumber Company.

Village population more than doubled between 1900 and 1910. As Detroit became an industrial giant, growth in the suburb continued. In 1920 the population was slightly over 6,000, up from 1072 in 1910. R. L. Polk reported a local population of 21,840 in 1928, while the 1930 population was estimated at 22,805.

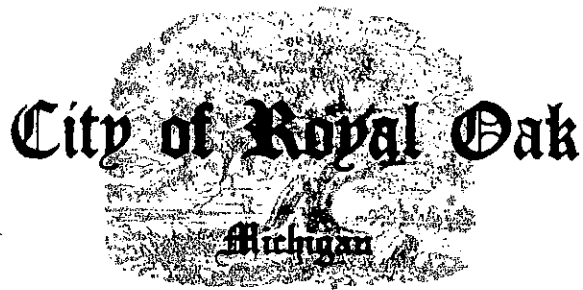
The twentieth century saw a high degree of home-ownership in the community, which was fast becoming an important suburban enclave for Detroit and Pontiac.

### **The Community in Recent Years**

Enhanced economic opportunities in Royal Oak during the 1970s and early 1980s led to another period of local commercial redefinition. Unique shops and restaurants opened in the downtown area mixing in with existing more traditional businesses. Today the charm of an eclectic downtown along with well maintained residential neighborhoods and high quality schools help Royal Oak continue to be a popular community.

### **Property History**

Subject property is part of the Phillip Storz homestead and lies on lots one through four of block three in the original plat of Royal Oak. Phillip and Dorothea Storz emigrated from Tuttlingen, Wurtenburg, Germany in 1854 to Detroit, where they had relatives. The Storz family moved to Royal Oak about 1857 and established a shoe shop. Storz's competition was Jacob Erb, who began his shoe business in Royal Oak in 1856.



MEMBER MICHIGAN MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

April 26, 2004

## Notice of Public Hearing

Pursuant to local ordinance<sup>1</sup> and state law<sup>2</sup> the City of Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee will hold a public hearing concerning its Hilzinger Block Building proposed historic district, 106-110 South Main Street, Assessor's Plat No 20 South 0.30 feet of East 49.5 feet of Lot 1 of Lot 4, excluding the North 2 feet of the East 29 feet of the West 60.5 of S.D. Lot 4, and Assessor's Plat No. 20, Lot 4; Blk. 3.

A copy of the preliminary report is available for review at the city clerk's office at 211 Williams Street, Royal Oak, Michigan.

The public hearing is scheduled for **Wednesday, May 12, 2004, at 7:00 p.m., at the Mahany-Meining Community Center, 3500 Marais, Royal Oak, Michigan 48073.**

<sup>1</sup> 211 Williams Street • P.O. Box 64 • Royal Oak, MI 48068-0064 • Phone Area Code (248)  
City of Royal Oak Ordinance No. 94-21, as amended by Ordinance No. 98-14.

<sup>2</sup> Local Historic Districts Act; MCL 399.201, et seq.

Assessor.....246-3110	Engineering.....246-3260	Ice Arena.....246-3950	Recreation.....246-3180
Building Insp.....246-3210	FAX.....246-3001	Info Systems.....246-3080	Rental Assistance.....246-3290
Cable TV (WROK).....246-3770	Finance.....246-3030	Motor Pool.....246-3370	Senior/Community Cir.....246-3900
City Attorney.....246-3240	Fire Dept. (Bus).....246-3800	Planning & Zoning.....246-3280	TDD.....246-3010
City Clerk.....246-3050	General Info for HDSC Jon Carls.....246-3800	Public Works.....246-3500	Treasury.....246-3140
City Manager.....246-3200	Housing Assistance.....246-3130	Public Service Dept.....246-3300	Water Bills.....246-3160
Code Enforcement.....246-3210	Human Resources.....246-3070	Purchasing.....246-3202	





Historic District Study Committee  
Public Hearing regarding Hilzinger Block Building  
7:00 PM / Wednesday, May 12, 2004  
Senior / Community Center

1. Hearing called to order at 7:07 / quorum recognized
2. Members present: Ruth Cleaveland, Rob Duchene, Pat Franz, Erik Tungate
3. Public Comment: Frank Versagi praised Mr. Jon Carlson for his seeking of voluntary historic designation.
4. Members of the HDSC gave thanks to Mr. Carlson for seeing the beauty in older buildings and for having the fortitude and patience in following the process through to conclusion.  
Mr. Carlson responded that the support of the HDSC was valuable in his endeavors.  
MOTION: The Historic District Study Committee recommends that the Royal Oak City Commission designate the Hilzinger Block Building as an historic district.  
MOTION made by Ms. Cleaveland and seconded by Mr. Tungate. PASSED unanimously
5. Public Hearing adjourned at 7:16



CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
CITY OF ROYAL OAK

SUBJECT: Historic Designation for the Hilzinger Block Building

MEETING DATE: June 2, 2004



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**Members of the Historic District Study Committee**

The City Attorney's Office, has completed the proposed ordinance establishing the Hilzinger Block Building. Under the city's ordinances regulating historic designation, the Historic District Study Committee must recommend approval of the ordinance to the City Commission. Should the committee adopt this recommendation, the ordinance will be presented to the City Commission for approval.

The proposed ordinance follows the recommendations of the study committee's earlier report, "The Royal Oak Savings Bank Block Report," seeking to have the entire study area placed in a historic district. The city commission is free to accept the ordinance as written, reject the proposal in its entirety or to reduce the size of the proposed historic district.

Should the committee desire to recommend the approval of the ordinance to the City Commission for adoption (a necessary step), a proposed resolution is prepared for your review.

WHEREAS, the City of Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee has completed its study of the proposed Hilzinger Block Historic District, and

WHEREAS, the Historic District Study Committee has held public hearings on the proposed Hilzinger Block Historic District, both as required by state statute and city ordinance, and therefore

*AND* BE IT RESOLVED, that the Historic District Study Committee recommends to the City Commission that the following ordinance be adopted:

**ORDINANCE NO. 2004-\_\_\_\_\_**

**An ordinance to create the Hilzinger Block Building Historic District under the guidelines established by Ordinance No. 94-21, the Historic District Study Committee Ordinance, as amended.**

THE CITY OF ROYAL OAK ORDAINS:

Section 1. TITLE. This ordinance is ~~shall also be~~ known as the "Hilzinger Block **BLOC** Historic District Ordinance."

Section 2. PURPOSE. The purpose of this ordinance is to provide for the preservation and/or rehabilitation of the historic site known as the "Hilzinger Block Building Historic District," Royal Oak, Michigan, also known more specifically as:

Assessor's Plat No. 20 South 0.30 feet of East 49.5 feet of Lot 1 of Lot 4, excluding the North 2 feet of the East 29 feet of the West 60.5 of S.D. Lot 4.

Assessor's Plat No. 20 Lot 4; Blk. 3 25-21-231-013

Section 3. ELIGIBILITY. The Royal Oak City Commission determines that the property described above is eligible for local historic designation under the guidelines established by City of Royal Oak Ordinance No. 94-21, the Historic District Study Committee Ordinance, as amended.

Section 4. DESIGNATION. The Royal Oak City Commission hereby designates the property described in Section 2 as an historic district pursuant to City of Royal Ordinance No. 94-21, the Historic District Study Committee Ordinance, as amended.

Section 5. CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS. The owner or owners of the property or portions of the property described in Section 2 are required to apply for and obtain a certificate of appropriateness before commencing any work in the historic site. When considering an application, the Historic District Commission will be guided by the standards for rehabilitation set forth by the United States Secretary of the Interior at 26 CFR part 67 and Ordinance No. 95-13.

Section 6. SEVERABILITY. If any section, subsection, clause, phrase or portion of this ordinance is for any reason held invalid or unconstitutional by any court of competent jurisdiction, such portion shall be deemed a separate, distinct and independent portion of this ordinance, and such holding shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this ordinance.

Section 7. SAVINGS. All proceedings pending and all rights and liabilities existing, acquired or incurred at the time this ordinance takes effect are saved and may be consummated according to the law in force when they are commenced.

Section 8. REPEALER. All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict with this ordinance are repealed only to the extent necessary to give this ordinance full force and effect.

Section 9. EFFECTIVE DATE. This ordinance takes effect ten (10) days after its final passage.

Respectfully Submitted,

---

Charles Semchena, Jr.  
City Attorney

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mark Liss". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" and last name "Liss" clearly distinguishable.

---

Mark O. Liss  
Assistant Deputy City Attorney



Eventually Storz bought the entire block bounded by First, Second, Center streets and Washington Avenue and located his house and business at the southwest corner of Main and First [Map #3, page 27, Map #4, page 28, Map #5, page 29, and Map #6, page 30]. A daughter, Mary, married William Hilzinger in 1883. William Hilzinger was born August 20, 1854, in Tuttlingen, Wurtenburg, Germany. He came to Detroit in 1870 and after opening a shoemaking business in Warren. Mary and William relocated to Royal Oak, where they would raise nine children and create a renowned reputation in the community.

Described as progressive, Hilzinger was active in civic affairs, taking a particular interest in education and serving several terms on the school board. He also had an active and keen interest in business. In time he gave up the cobbler trade in favor of a wholesale milk and butter business. The operation supplied dairy products to retailers in Detroit from a station he established at the southwest corner of Main and First streets on the land of his in-laws [Photo #1, page 12]. This milk station rested on a portion of that site which would later become the Hilzinger Block Building.

In 1901 Hilzinger dug a deep well on the property and struck an underground mineral spring. Hilzinger bottled the water and sold it in Detroit under the trade name of "Tuttlingen Health Water." Even though he reportedly had a solid customer base, Hilzinger dropped the water enterprise quite soon – perhaps due to his emerging interest in electric power. Then Hilzinger drilled for gas at the site, hoping to tap a well to power his electric generator. Legend states he did strike a deposit, sending a plume of flame high into the air. He abandoned this project, however, when he was unable to control the gas flow and the flame eventually died out.

Hilzinger had opened a gasoline powered electric plant in about 1900, again located near the former milk station and in the basement of the future Hilzinger Block Building site [Photo #26, page 24]. The loud gasoline engine initially provided power to about sixteen streetlights, four or five homes, three businesses and the hotel. Electric lighting was provided from dark until midnight, but occasionally the hotel would bargain for extra time to host a gathering. The Village Council, trying to be fiscally responsible, decided they would not pay for streetlights on moonlit nights. Frustrated with trying to operate in this political climate and compete with gas lighting, Hilzinger closed his plant in 1904 and sold the equipment.

After selling his electric plant Hilzinger went into a number of successful businesses: manufacturing masonry blocks (to serve the growing construction industry), buying and selling real estate (where he amassed a sizeable holdings), and banking (where he was appointed second vice-president by First State Bank and later after merger, vice-president of the State Saving Bank).

Although largely retired by the middle nineteen twenties, William Hilzinger almost certainly coached two of his sons, Albert and Carl, into opening their hardware store [Photo #27, page 24]. At the time Albert was a repairman at Eckstein-Lakie (the local Ford dealer on South Main Street) and Carl was a driver for the Royal Oak Creamery.

The Hilzinger Block Building was built at a time when Royal Oak was rapidly growing and the Hilzinger family decided to compete in hardware and paint sales [Photo #2, page 12]. [Map #4, page 28 and Map #6, page 30]. A double house, numbers 108 (home to Jacob Erb) and 112 (home to Mrs. M. Hall), was raised from lot three to make way for the new building. At, or about the same time, Carla Hilzinger Romeyn and William's son-in-law built Romeyn Drug Store on lot one of block three. These two new buildings meant family land at the southwest corner of Main and First streets would still be used for business purposes but no longer used for homes. Mary and William moved to a home at 405 East Third Street in 1924, on land previously part of a twenty-one acre farm Phillip Storz bought in 1868. The tradition of mixed-use properties on Main Street was giving way to purely commercial enterprises as the downtown developed.

Built in 1925 the "commercial-modern," two story Hilzinger Block Building was laid up in masonry blocks with red brick veneer and limestone detailing, all above a full basement. The basement incorporates a section of the former Hilzinger powerhouse [Photo #3, page 13].

Initially, the Hilzinger brothers' business used only the middle storefront (108 South Main Street). Tenants flanking the hardware store included a continuous series of restaurants at 106 South Main Street, including: Maison's (Daniel J. Maison, proprietor, from about 1925 until 1930); the Acorn (proprietors Frank Herman 1930 and by Mrs. George [Mattie D.] Markwart 1936); Enners Dining Room and Bakery (Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. and Helen K. Enners, 1940s to mid-1950s).

In 1926 number 110 South Main Street housed Famous Dry Goods owned by Louis Biederman. Above was John R. Westerburger's Main Ball Room, offering "special rates for private parties and dances," later replaced by the Fraternal Order of Eagles hall. Other organizations renting second floor space through the mid nineteen thirties included the Maccabees; the Order of DeMoley for Boys and Rainbow Girls; local Masonic orders, Masonic F and AM; Northwood Lodge 551; Royal Oak Lodge 464; Royal Arch Masons Chapter 167; and Order of Eastern Star, Oakwood Chapter 492, Royal Oak Chapter 392.

By 1950 Enners Dining Room replaced the Acorn Restaurant at 106 South Main Street and Gordon Clothiers and Furnishings at 110 flanked the Hilzinger Brothers Hardware. National Life and Accident Insurance maintained offices on the second floor.

In their first hardware expansion about 1955, the Hilzinger brothers took over the 106 restaurant space. In 1963 a second hardware expansion incorporated the shop used by Gordon Clothiers. New aluminum frame display windows linked the three store fronts and enameled steel panels obscured the original brick veneer. The 1920s post art-nouveau centrally located sign was replaced by the current lyre-shaped marquis sign running the full second story at the north end of the building added to the modernization, although the original steel-frame casement windows lighting the second story were retained [Photo #4, page 13]. Eventually Albert Hilzinger turned the business over to Frank Hilzinger and Ray Hilzinger [Photo #28, page 24] and eventually Ray's son, Peter Hilzinger [Photo #29, page 24], became the manager.



In 1955 through 1957 world-renowned American architect, *Minoru Yamasaki*, [Photo #30, page 24] located his office in Royal Oak. He first moved his Madison Avenue, Detroit office to West Fifth Street in Royal Oak, but as his architectural ideology and popularity quickly expanded, he moved his engineering department to the second floor of the Hilzinger Block Building.

One of the firm's original engineers, Henry Guthard, PE, [Photo #31, page 24] the engineer who managed the construction of the World Trade Center twin towers says "it was a wonderful time to work with Yama". Yamasaki would call the young engineers over the phone and they would run back and forth, up and down Main Street. Guthard believes many buildings and sites designed in Royal Oak not only changed our nation's architecture and way of life – they changed the world. One project designed in Royal Oak was the 1962 World's Fair, which Guthard says ultimately led to the commission as architects of the World Trade Center twin towers, a magnificent change in New York City's skyline. On September 11, 2001, Yamasaki's twin towers were the targets of international terrorism, altering world history.

While in Royal Oak, Yamasaki's architectural firm also designed Land's Pharmacy (an early drive-through pharmacy just three blocks west of the Hilzinger office site); the McGregor Memorial Conference Center, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, 1958; and the Reynolds Metals Building, Southfield, Michigan, 1959.

### **Architectural Description**

The two-story Hilzinger Block Building was laid up in masonry blocks beneath a red brick veneer with limestone detailing. The building skeleton is iron columns and beams supporting wood floor joists. Walls are finished in sand plaster.

Prior to recent restoration, the 1950 through 1963 modernization provided the following views of the exterior: On the Main Street (east) façade, the original brick veneer was covered with enameled steel panels on both stories. Storefront openings were modernized with aluminum frames holding full sized display windows and the main entry. At the second floor the original windows were retained. The 1920s post art-nouveau centrally located sign was replaced by the current lyre-shaped marquis sign running the full second story at the north end of the building. This sign is a contributing resource to the district. The building also had two fabric awnings -- a full width over the street level hardware store and a two-thirds width awning above the second story windows of two businesses [Photo #4, page 13].

The west side of the building facing the alley and a municipal parking lot, was modernized as well. The first floor was opened up and full width and height display windows and an off-center entry in aluminum frames, covering about two-thirds of building width added [Photo #5, page 14]. At the remaining south one-third are basement entry stairs (with hinged ramp) and a one-story masonry block ell (post-1950) [Photo #6, page 14]. At the north one-third is a service courtyard serving 100-104 South Main Street (Memphis Smoke, formerly Romeyn Drug Store) with a dogleg stairway serving the upstairs of the Hilzinger Block Building. The entire lower level is protected by a mansard pent-roof projecting to the east edge of the service alley, supported by square (aluminum-wrapped) columns.

The south side is un-fenestrated, and mostly obscured by the taller neighboring building and a covered stairway serving number 112. The north side links to its neighbor at the east one-half, while the west one-half opens onto the previously mentioned service courtyard. At this courtyard the north side second story has a doorway with steel panel door, double-hung windows (one paired set and two single openings) and a window opening filled with glass blocks. In late 2001 the enamel panels were removed from the Main Street (east) side revealing the original, although damaged, façade, which has been restored [Photo #8, page 15].

This original Main Street façade is typical early twentieth century modern in use of brick patterns and limestone detailing. The three storefronts feature inset entrances and large display windows. Access to the second story is through an offset entry at 108. The first floor windows and doors are framed in aluminum. Paired window units with limestone sills and a continuous limestone lintel open the second floor of each storefront. Window divisions are made of stacked header and stretcher bricks, with sills and lintel relieved by header courses. These second floor windows were steel frame with hopper units, replacements from earlier double-panel units with matching transom lights. Between the lintel and cornice line is a centered limestone legend inscribed "**HILZINGER BLOCK**" [Photo #7, page 15] and finished with decorative brickwork and stone details. The wall ends with a stylized entablature of a limestone band between a course of headered and a course of soldiered bricks, capped by a dentiled limestone cornice. The large lyre-shaped marquis with blinking lights Hilzinger sign at the north end of the building, circa 1962, replaced the original sign. [Photos #22, 23 24, and 25, page 23] This was part of the last expansion and overall modernization which included installing the enameled steel panels on the east façade [Photo #8, page 15].

## **Interior:**

### **Basement**

The basement is basically one large open space with access by a wooden stairway [Photo #9, page 16]. Near the west (rear) of the basement are relic corrugated steel panels from earlier partitions [Photo #10, page 16]. This southwest corner appears to be part of the former Hilzinger power plant [Photo #3, page 13].

### **First Story**

The first level was originally divided into three stores, was later opened into a single commercial space [Photo #11, page 17]. A rear door opens into a masonry block addition housing utility meters and opens onto a platform near to the rear alley stairs [Photo #12, page 17]. A single angled entry accesses Main Street, next to the enclosed stairway of single run wooden steps down to the basement under a double-run iron stairway to the second story [Photo #13, page 18]. Iron I-beam posts, boxed in, support the iron beams and wooden joists of the second story.

The original wood floors covered with multiple layers of linoleum tiles, are exposed where shelving units were recently removed [Photo #14, page 18]. The ceiling still has the original pressed tin covering [Photo #15 page 19].

## **Second Story**

The off-center double-width double-run stairway (between 106 and 108) goes to the second story [Photo #16, page 19].

A small rectangular auditorium is lit by an original skylight [Photo #17, page 20]. The landing and the stair floors are finished in terrazzo tile. The north commercial space has linoleum tiles in the front room [Photo #18, page 20] and original wood floors elsewhere. Ceilings throughout remain the original pressed tin [Photo #19, page 21].

## **Streetscape**

This single resource historic district is situated amidst more contemporary buildings, is distinguishable from its surrounding resources, and stands on its own merit.

Let it be said that the involvement of the Hilzinger Family and the early offices of Minoru Yamasaki are sufficient to allow the historic district to distinguish it from the surrounding resources and fully qualifies it to stand on its own merit. In addition the architecture of this original Main Street façade is typical early twentieth century modern in use of brick patterns and limestone detailing and the other elements maintain the unique appearance that buildings of that period were defined.

[Photo #20 and #21, page 22 show the building in its context.]

## **Characteristics of the building significant for Historic District Commission review of the property**

- The original Main Street façade is typical early twentieth century modern in use of red brick veneer with limestone detailing.
- The lyre-shaped marquis sign with blinking lights running the full second story on the east side and at the north end of the building is a contributing resource to the district.
- Inset entrances and large windows are framed in aluminum.
- Paired window units with limestone sills and a continuous limestone lintel open the second floor of each storefront.
- Window divisions are made of stacked header and stretcher bricks, with sills and lintel relieved by header courses.
- Between the lintel and cornice line is a centered limestone legend inscribed "HILZINGER BLOCK" and finished with decorative brickwork and stone details.
- The wall ends with a stylized entablature of a limestone band between a course of headered and a course of soldiered bricks, capped by a dentiled limestone cornice.

### Criteria Used for Evaluation

The criteria used to evaluate the Hilzinger Block Building are in compliance with those required for the National Register of Historic Places, A through C, as follows:

#### 1 Criterion "A" – Association with Events

The Hilzinger Block Building meets criterion "A" as it demonstrates an "association with events that have made a significant contribution to broad patterns of Royal Oak history." The building represents the transitions from wilderness to rural to urban. Modern commercial architecture finally dominating the downtown streets, replaced earlier undeveloped, then domestic, commercial, and mixed-use properties. This critical period redefined Royal Oak, where as in many places across the nation, the community shifted from rural to urban during the post World War I years. As an early business, the hardware store held a familiar and long-tenured niche serving four generations of hometown builders, trades-people, and do-it-yourselfers in a fast growing bedroom suburb of Detroit. The earliest businesses within the settlement were located here, and the building itself contains remnants of a commercial well and the first utility (electrical) service to the community. The restaurants and early clothiers in the building also served community needs for many decades. The long series of businesses, arts, and fraternal activities on the upper floor also represent the roots of activities that would grow and flower throughout the city.

#### 2 Criterion "B" – Association with Lives of Significant Persons in Royal Oak's History

This property's association with early settlers and pioneers as well as other leaders participating in civic, social, and business activities located at this site, make the preservation of this building essential. Besides his successful businesses and public service William Hilzinger brought the first electrical power to the community. William headed a family that became well known and respected for generations. As merchants, the Hilzinger brothers ran a popular hardware store that guided people on "how-to" for many generations. Besides being a place to buy nails and plaster, this family hardware store was a forum for news, opinion, pure gossip, and tips for successful projects and life in general.

One prominent occupant was world renowned American architect, Minoru Yamasaki. Another was Henry Guthard, an engineer for Yamasaki & Associates, who managed the construction of the World Trade Center twin towers.

#### 3 Criterion "C" – Distinctive Building Characteristics

Architecturally, the building embodies distinctive characteristics of type and period of construction. The Hilzinger Block is an intact Commercial Modern building, a simple stylistic expression gaining favor in the post World War I years up to World War II. Less obvious in expression than Art Deco but more detailed than later d'Art-moderne, Commercial Modern offers an artistic blend of materials in subtle patterns. Easily built and economical, these buildings used both modern and traditional materials.

The Hilzinger Block Building illustrates this style superbly through the use of subtle brick patterns and limestone detailing both structural and decorative. The intact Hilzinger lyre-shaped sign at the north end recalls the evolution of the building to meet changing business needs. This example of the "atomic age" advertising embodies a design popular coast-to-coast during the 1950s.

### National Register Site Eligibility

Public Act 169 of 1970 requires that the Study Committee be guided by the Secretary of the Interior's evaluation criteria for the National Register of Historic Places. [The Study Committee finds all National Register criteria apply to the Hilzinger Block Building. First, the building is associated with events that significantly contributed to broad patterns of commerce and trade throughout Royal Oak's past. Second, the Hilzinger Block Building embodies distinctive characteristics of a type and period of construction. As described in this report, the building is associated with every important period in the development of Royal Oak.] The Committee believes the Hilzinger Block Building may be eligible for designation as a National Register of Historic Places site. (1)

### Conclusion and Recommendation

We understand historic preservation is a complex sensitive issue in many communities and Royal Oak is no exception. Under normal circumstances, a property owner/developer can propose demolishing an historic building to construct a beautiful new building that the market supports, fulfilling all ordinances and building codes. With such proposals local government, civic groups, business leaders, and citizens can easily forget about any existing historic building on a proposed site.

This year our committee was provided a unique opportunity with the Hilzinger Block Building. [A local developer, Jon A. Carlson, who takes pride in historic properties, restored the historic Hilzinger Block Building to its 1920's condition. We see this building as a gift - a gift given to the community that must be nurtured and maintained.] Today, as our downtown evolves with restaurants, entertainment, retail, urban brownstone town homes, and even a high-rise development, designation of historic properties such as the Hilzinger Block Building is crucial, not only to preserve our community's past, but also to prepare its future. (2)

This site transformed an area of early pioneer homes into mercantile and business use. Fortunately, with all of the new construction in our downtown, that we still have this original building, the Hilzinger Block Building on Main and First.

Not only was this building one of the first on modern Main Street, it was also the first in Royal Oak to house one of the greatest inventions, electric power. We can only imagine the conversations and debates in the building with Mr. Hilzinger on how electricity was going to revolutionize the way we live. As with electricity, this building was the community's bridge from "rural" to "modern industrial" in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

[Clearly this building needs to be protected. We see all State requirements for historic designation as being fulfilled.] Moreover, designating this building will set a precedent for other local historic building owners to follow in requesting historic designation. What a successful downtown Royal Oak can then have, mixing old with the new. (3)

Therefore, the Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee requests the Hilzinger Block Building be designated a Historic District, to honor the site, protect its asset to our community, and to demonstrate the beauty and benefits of historic preservation and adaptive reuse to all. The committee further requests the establishment by ordinance of a historic district entitled Hilzinger Block Historic District.

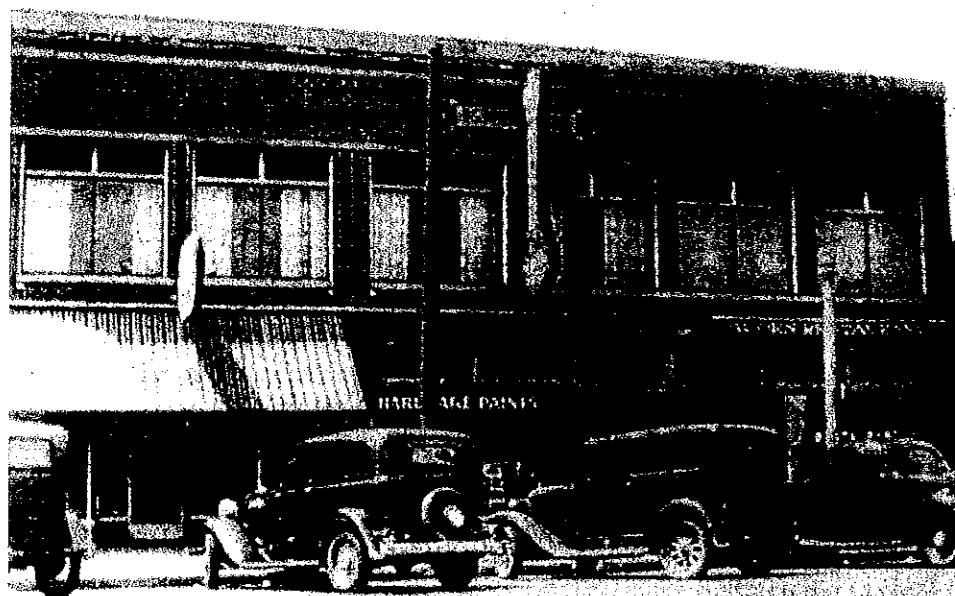
**Photograph Listing: Photographs are property of Jon A. Carlson except as noted.**



**Photo #1**

Dairy Products station, circa 1890.

View: Southwest Corner Main Street & First Street (now renamed Eleven Mile Road).



**Photo #2**

Hilzinger Hardware store, circa 1928.

View: Southwest Corner Main Street & Eleven Mile Road).

The Hilzinger Block Building was built at a time when Royal Oak was rapidly growing.

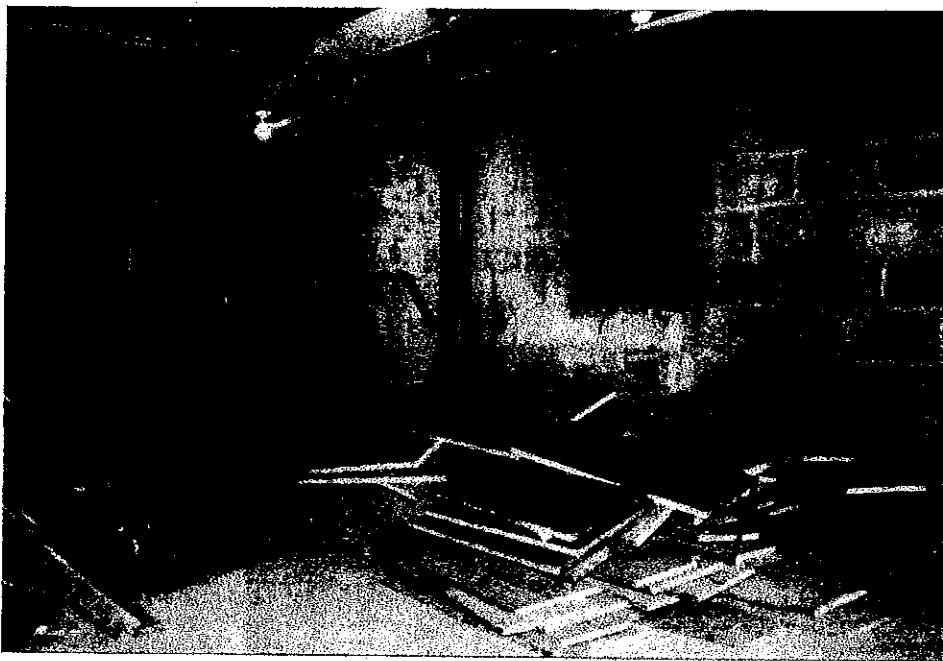


Photo #3

Hilzinger Hardware store, 2000.

View: The basement incorporates a section of the former Hilzinger powerhouse.



Photo #4

Hilzinger Hardware store, 2000.

View: A new sign projecting from the north end added to the modernization, although the original steel-frame casement windows lighting the second story were retained.



Photo #5

Hilzinger Hardware store, 2000.

View: The west side of the building facing the alley and a municipal parking lot.

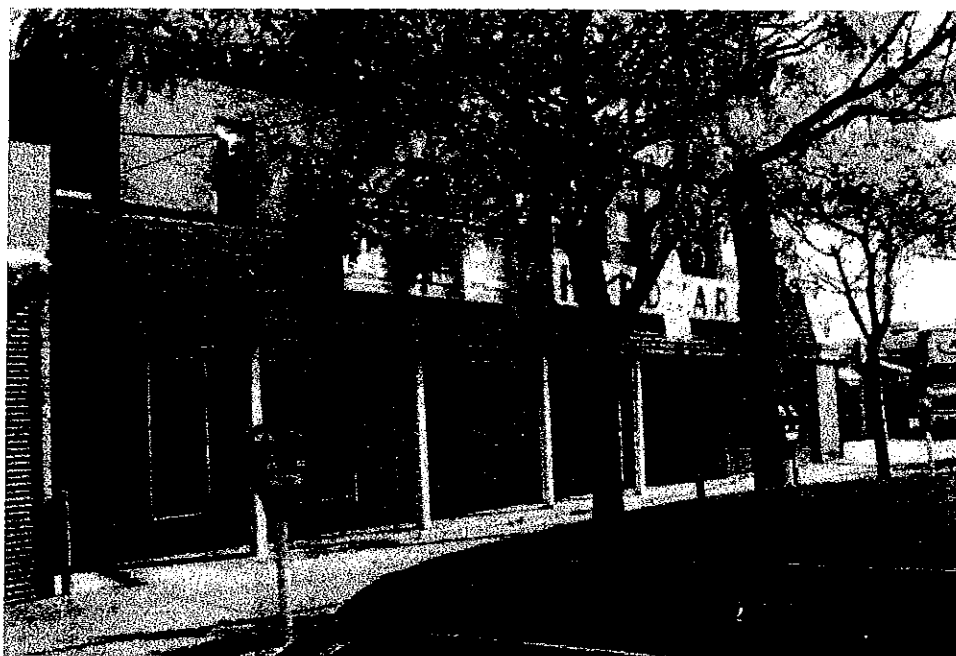


Photo #6

Hilzinger Hardware store, 2000.

View: At the remaining south one-third are basement entry stairs (with hinged ramp) and a one-story masonry block ell.





Photo #7

Hilzinger Hardware store, 2000.

Between the lintel and cornice line is a centered limestone legend inscribed **"HILZINGER BLOCK"**.

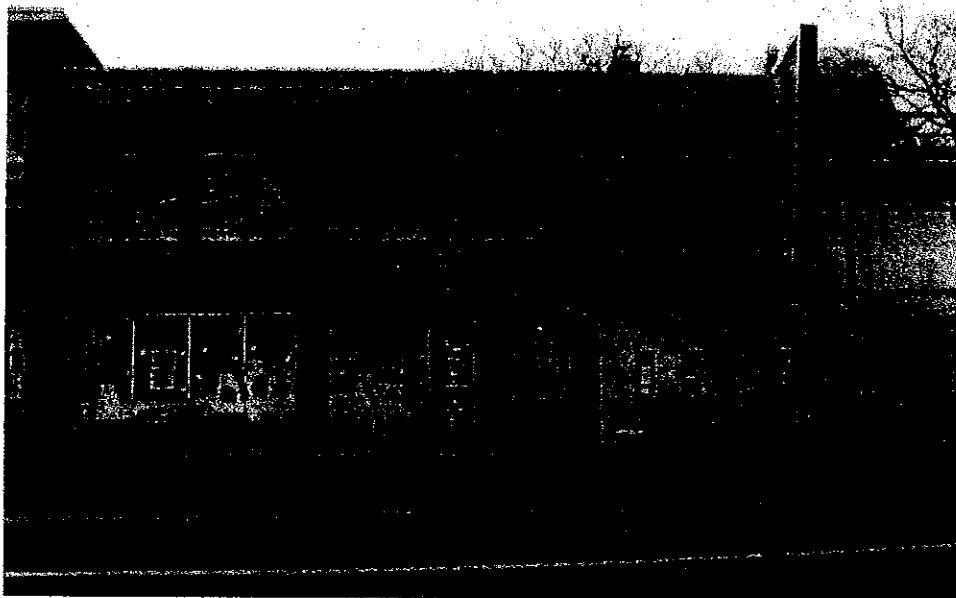


Photo #8

Hilzinger Hardware store, 2000.

View: The enamel panels were removed from the Main Street (east) side revealing the original, although damaged, façade.

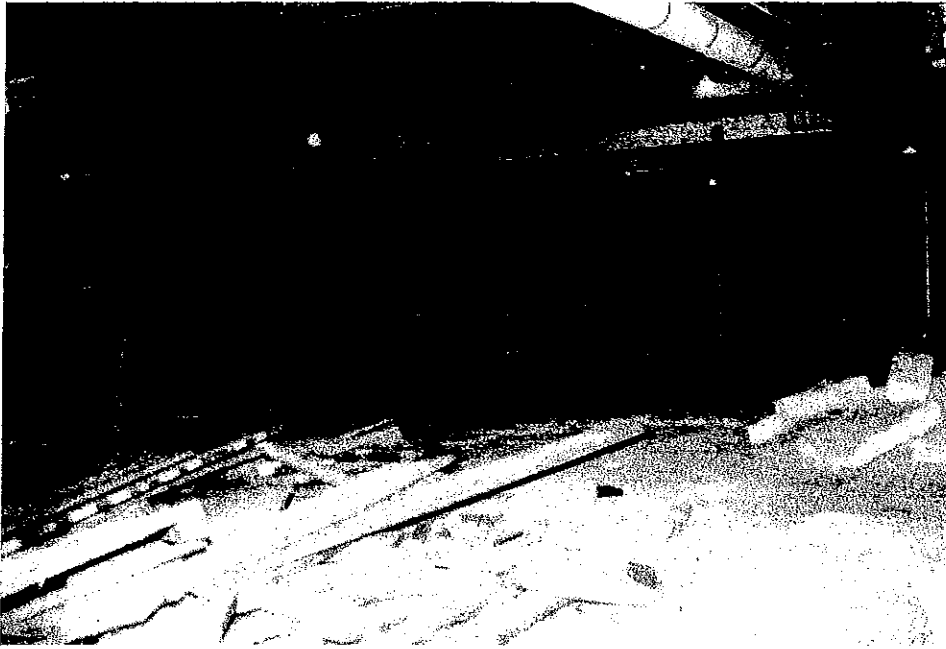


Photo #9

Hilzinger Hardward store, 2000.

View: The basement is basically one large open space with access by a wooden stairway.



Photo #10

Hilzinger Hardward store, 2000.

View: Relic corrugated steel panels from earlier partitions.

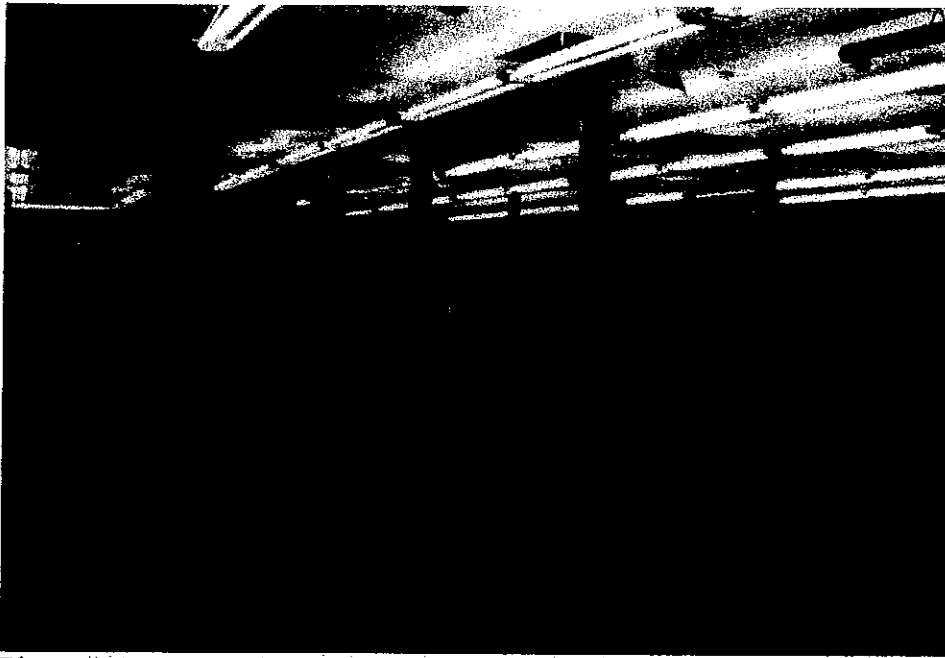


Photo #11

Hilzinger Hardware store, 2000.

View: The first level was originally divided into three stores, was later opened into a single commercial space.

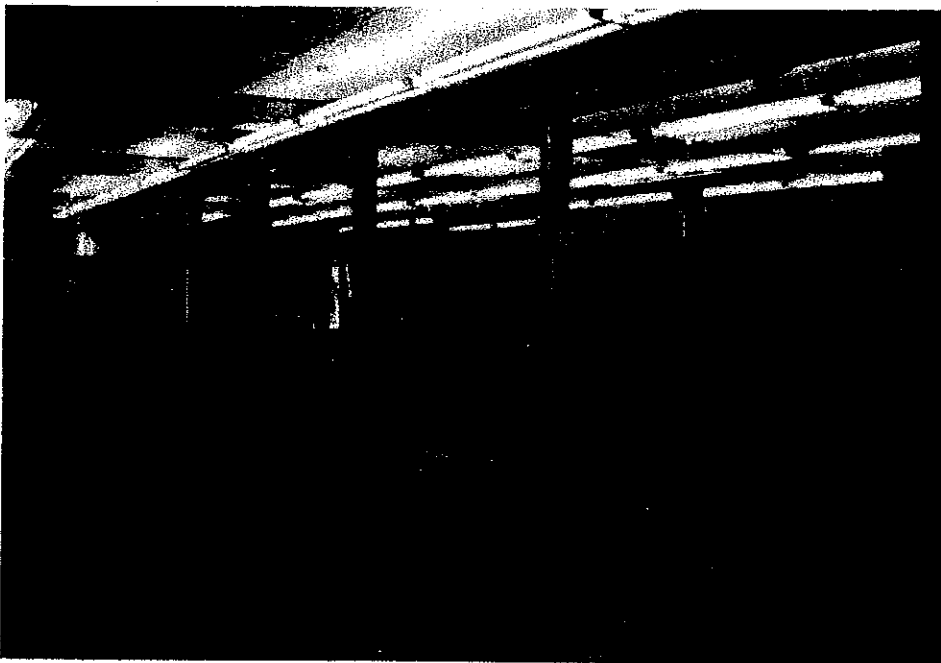


Photo #12

Hilzinger Hardware store, 2000.

View: A rear door opens into a masonry block addition housing utility meters and opens onto a platform near to the rear alley stairs.



Photo #13

Hilzinger Hardware store, 2000.

View: A single angled entry accesses Main Street, next to the enclosed stairway of single run wooden steps down to the basement under a double-run iron stairway to the second story.



Photo #14

Hilzinger Hardware store, 2000.

View: The original wood floors covered with multiple layers of linoleum tiles, are exposed where shelving units were recently removed

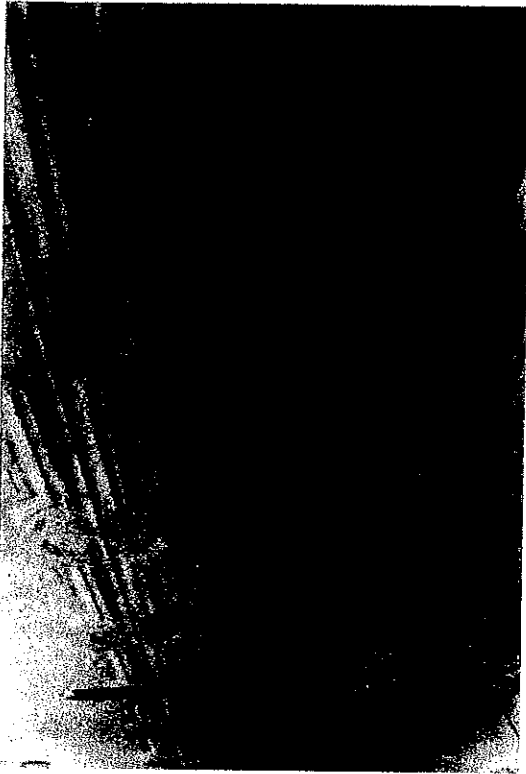


Photo #15  
Hilzinger Hardware store, 2000.  
View: The ceiling still has the original  
pressed tin covering.



Photo #16  
Hilzinger Hardware store, 2000.  
View: The off-center double-width  
double-run stairway (between 106 and  
108) goes to the second story

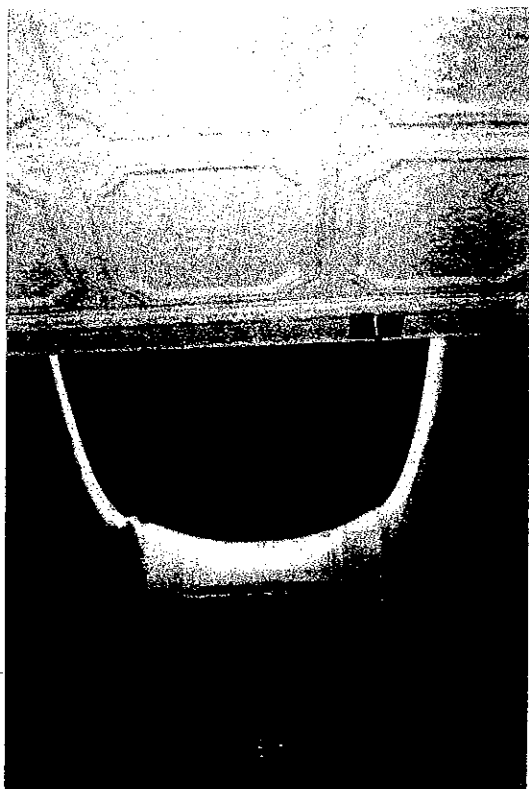


Photo #17

Hilzinger Hardware store, 2000.

View: A small rectangular auditorium is lit by an original skylight.



Photo #18

Hilzinger Hardware store, 2000.

View: The north commercial space has linoleum tiles in the front room.



Photo #19

Hilzinger Hardware store, 2000.

View: Ceilings throughout remain the original pressed tin.



Photo #20, 2000.

Southwest corner of South Main Street and West Eleven Mile Road. The Hilzinger Block Building, before restoration is the second building to the south and is the only building in the block that after restoration maintains the external appearance from the era of the 1920s.



Photo #21 2000.

Northwest of South Main Street and Second Street. The Hilzinger Block Building, before restoration is the building north of the tall brick building to the south and is the only building in the block that after restoration maintains the external appearance from the era of the 1920s. This photo shows the Hilzinger Block Building in its context. This single resource historic district is situated amidst more contemporary buildings, is distinguishable from its surrounding resources, and stands on its own merit.



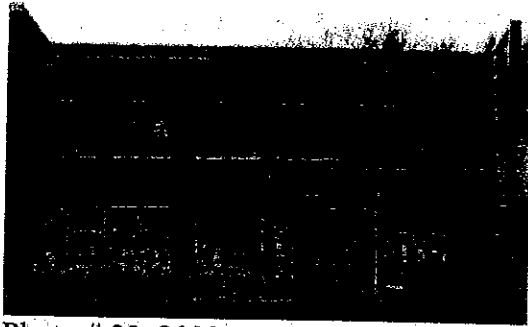


Photo # 22, 2000.



Photo # 23, 2000.

Hilzinger Hardware. The lyre-shaped marquis sign running the full second story at the north end of the building. This sign is a contributing resource to the district.



Photo # 24, 2003, by Owen A. Perkins.



Photo # 25, 2003, by Owen A. Perkins.

Hilzinger Block Building after restoration with lyre-shaped marquis sign.

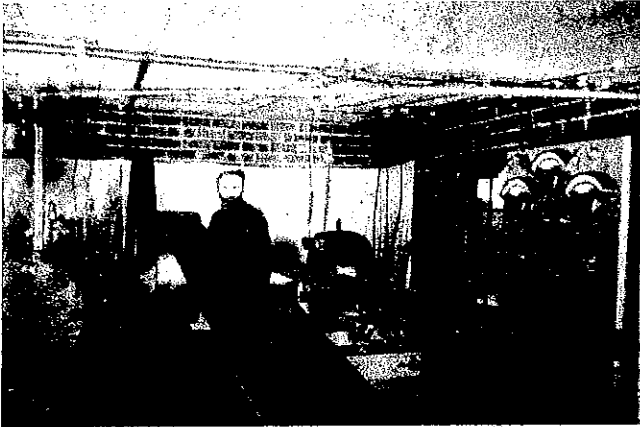


Photo #26, circa 1900.  
William Hilzinger in his electric plant.  
Photo from Owen A. Perkins Historical  
Photograph Collection.



Photo #27, 1960.  
Albert Hilzinger, owner of the Hilzinger  
Block Building and Hilzinger Ace  
Hardware Store.  
Photo from Carol Hilzinger.



Photo #28, 1980.  
Frank Hilzinger (left), Ray Hilzinger (right).  
Photo from Carol Hilzinger.



Photo #29, 2000.  
Peter Hilzinger.  
Photo from Carol Hilzinger.



Photo # 30 Minoru Yamasaki as he  
appeared in 1950s when his offices were  
located in Royal Oak, Michigan.  
Photo from files of the DetroitNews

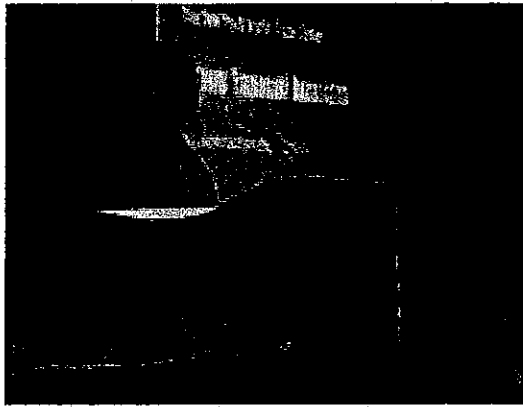
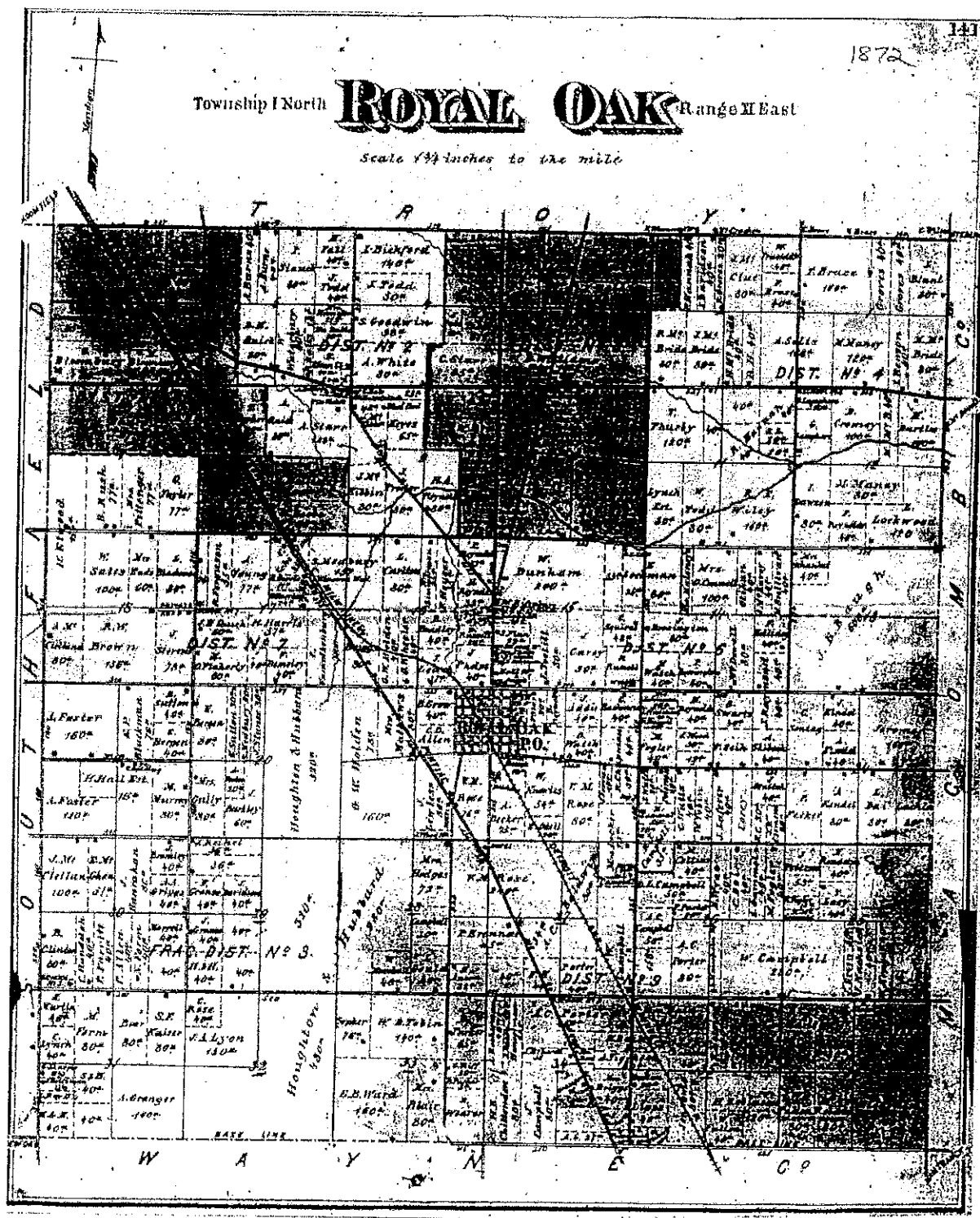
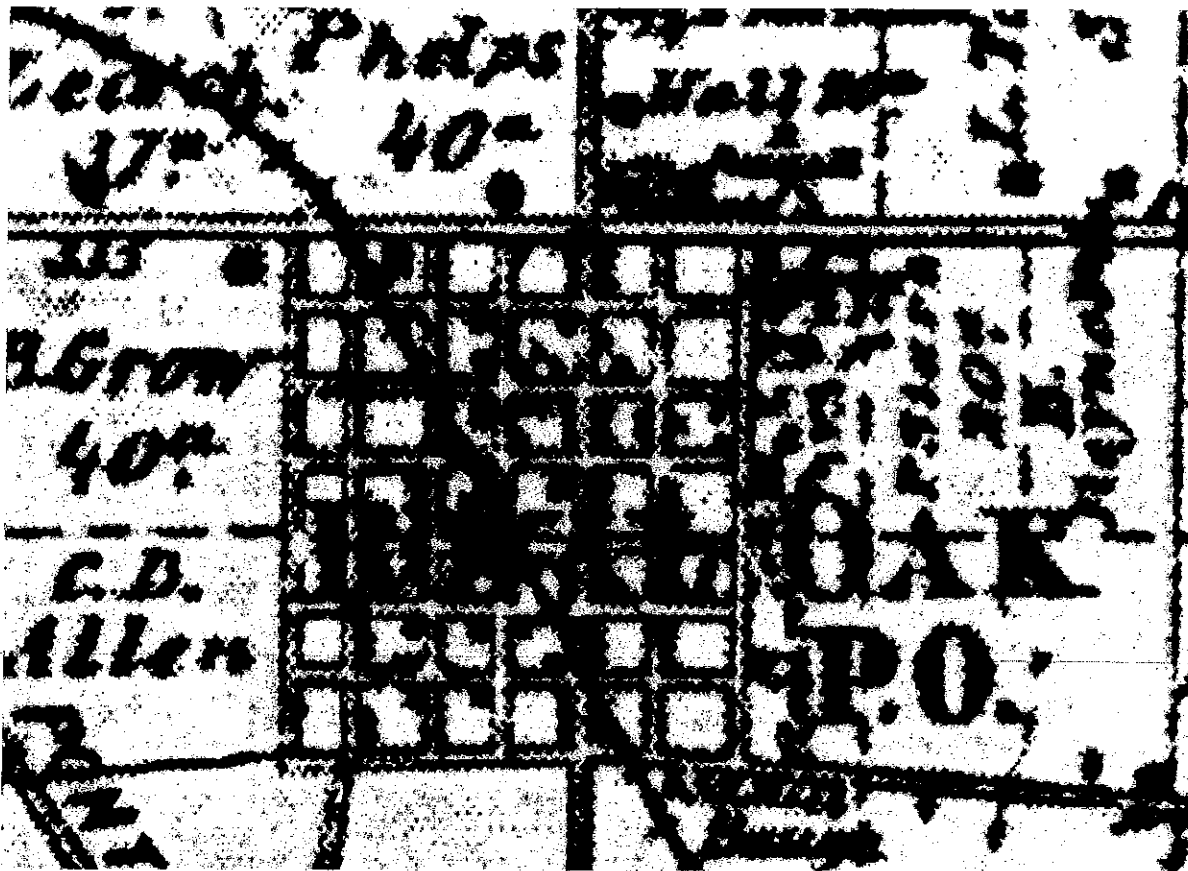


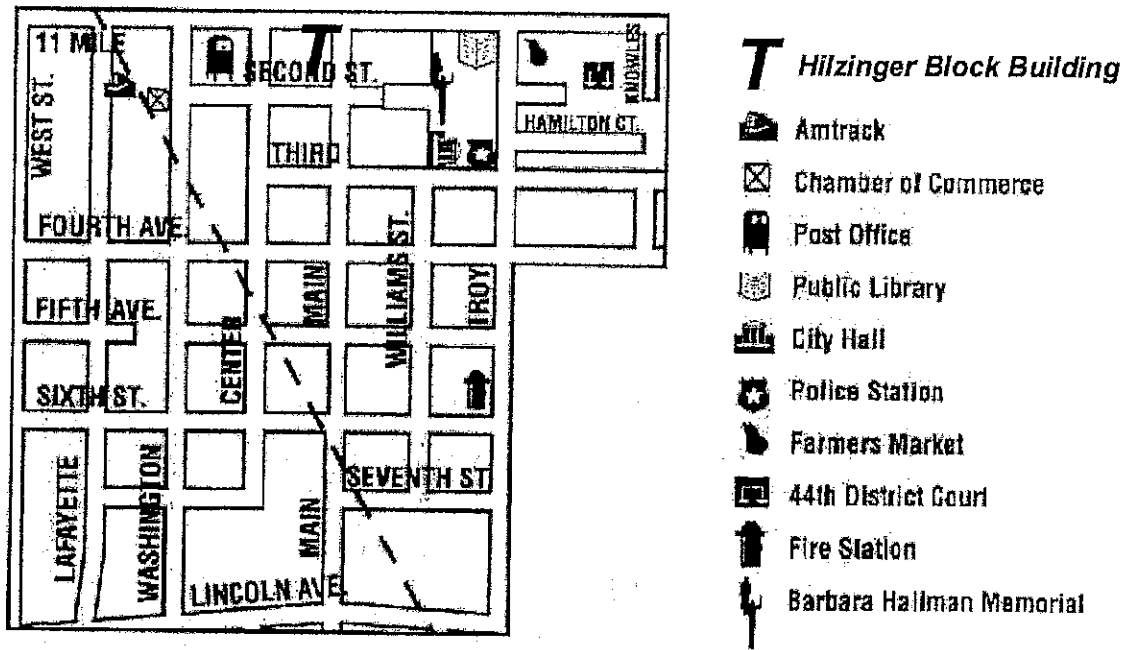
Photo # 31. Henry Guthard, PE, the  
engineer who managed the construction  
of the World Trade Center twin towers.  
Photo from REI2002 Post-Conference



Map #1: Royal Oak Township, T1N R2E, dated 1872.



Map #2: Village of Royal Oak, Royal Oak Township, Oakland County, Michigan, 1872.



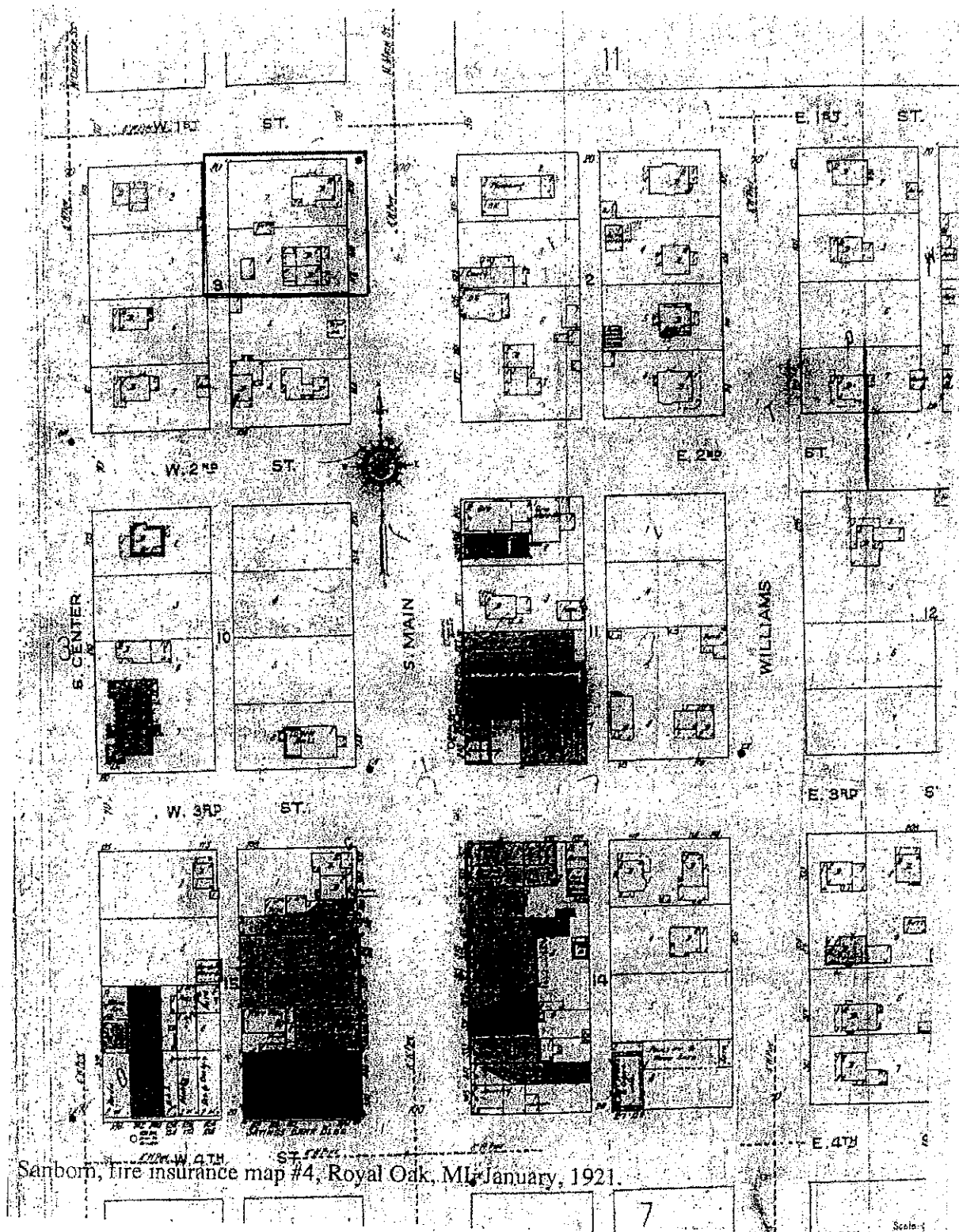
Map #3: Map of location of Hilzinger Block Building

**T** designates the location of the proposed historic district consisting of one building known as the **Hilzinger Block Building** located at 106-110 South Main Street in the downtown of the City of Royal Oak, Michigan.

# CITY OF ROYAL OAK MAP



Map #4: Map of location of Hilzinger Block Building.

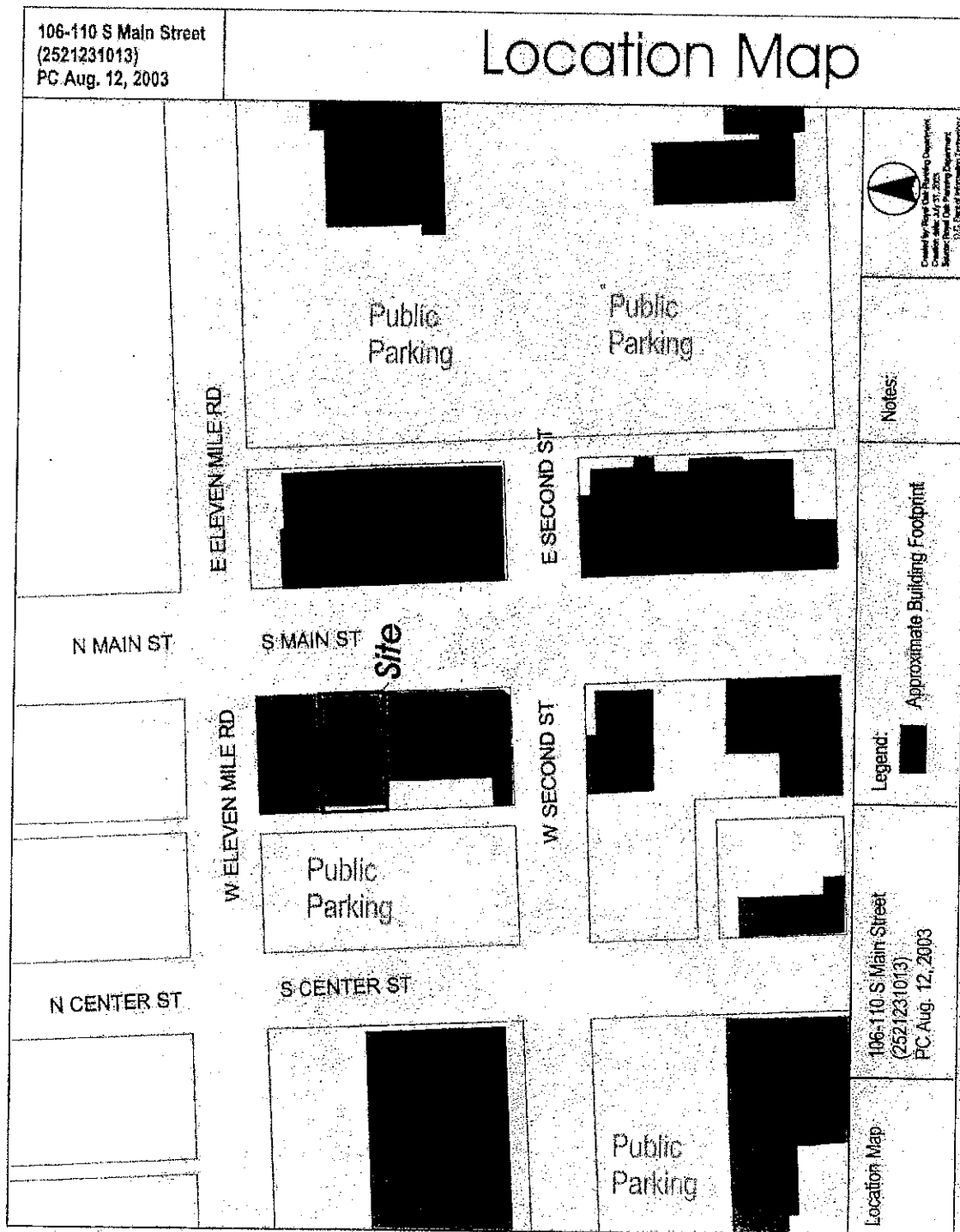


Map #5: Sanborn, fire insurance map, Royal Oak, Michigan, January 1921.

Sanborn fire insurance map #2, Royal Oak, MI, January, 1926.

Map #6: Sanborn, fire insurance map, Royal Oak, Michigan, January 1926.





Map #7: Location Map, 106-110 South Main Street, 2003, Courtesy Royal Oak Planning Department.

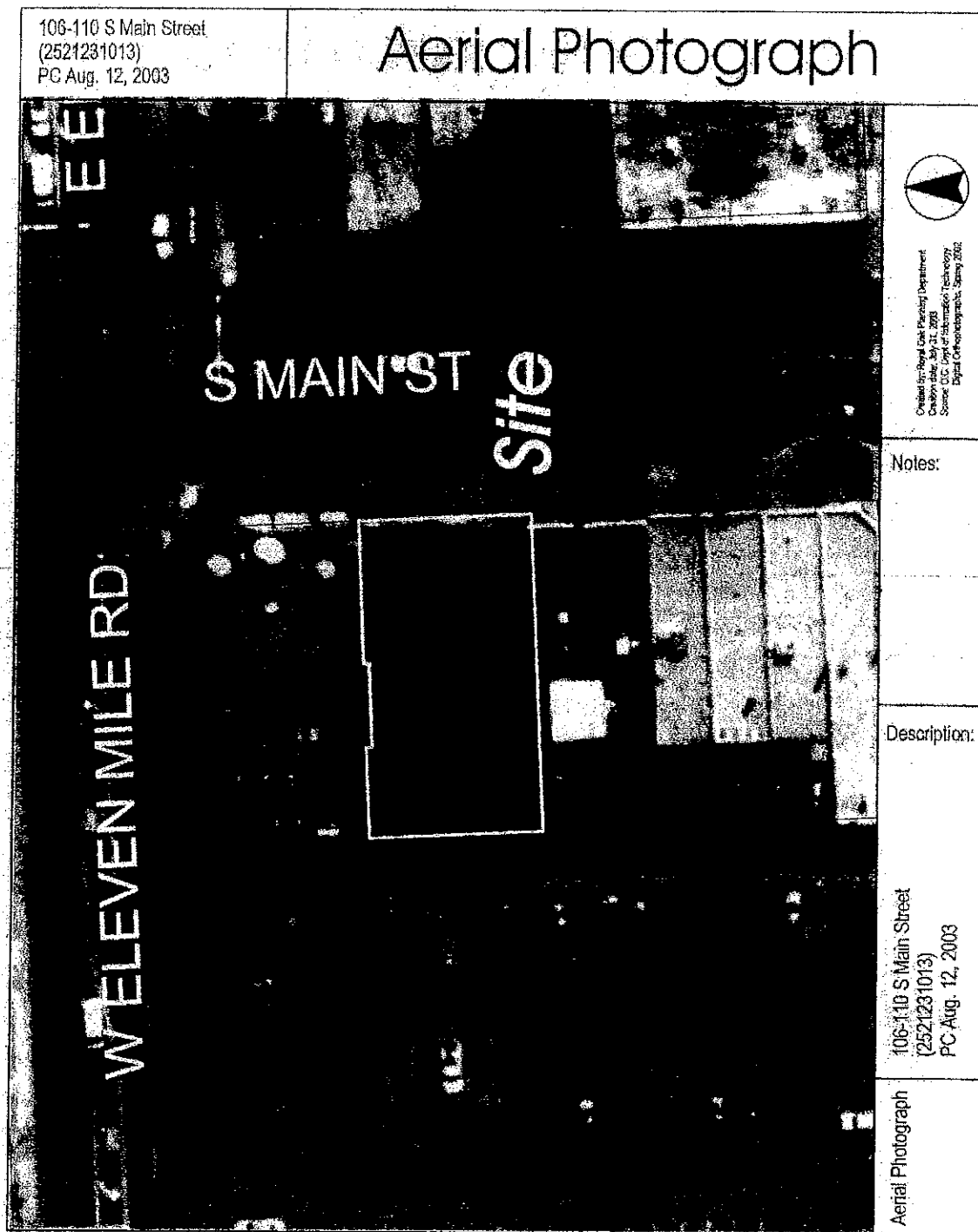


Photo #32, Location Aerial Photo, 106-110 South Main Street, 2003, Courtesy Royal Oak Planning Department.

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