



Royal Oak

## **HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE**

### **Vinsetta Bridges Historic District c. 1916**

Bridge #1: Mayfield Drive & Vinsetta Boulevard

Bridge #2: Greenleaf Drive & Vinsetta Boulevard

Bridge #3: Woodsboro Drive & Vinsetta Boulevard

Bridge #4: Cedar Hill Drive & Vinsetta Boulevard



*Bridge #3 at Woodsboro Drive and Vinsetta Boulevard*

**PRELIMINARY REPORT - April 23, 2023**

In memory of Ruth Cleaveland  
(1928 - 2022)

Historic District Study Committee Chairperson  
(2001 - 2021)



### **Charge of the Committee**

By ordinance dated December 19, 1994 the Royal Oak City Commission established the Royal Oak Historical District Study Committee in accordance with Michigan's Local Historic Districts Act, Public Act 169 (1970), as amended. 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 in 1992.

The Historic District Study Committee asked the Royal Oak City Commission for permission to study the concrete bridges on Vinsetta Boulevard between Woodward Avenue and 12 Mile Road for possible historic designation. The Royal Oak City Commission approved this request on March 14, 2022 and the study commenced.

### **Composition of Committee Membership**

Patrick Andras, finance, member Royal Oak Historical Commission

Vasilios Derdelakos, architect

Tammis Donaldson, architect, Ekocite Architecture

Robert Duchene, retired history teacher

Chris Kraska, architectural strategist

Eric Romain, engineer

Carol Schwanger, executive assistant to Royal Oak City Manager and Mayor

Leslie Snow, former history teacher

Lillian Wilson, PhD, historian/managing director, Wayne State University Humanities Clinic

### **The Historic District(s) Studied**

Vinsetta Bridges Historic District

### **The Boundaries of the Proposed District(s)**

#### **Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary of the proposed Vinsetta Bridge Historic District runs along the boulevard median from the Lawndale turn around to the turn around just before 12 Mile Road. It includes four bridges, the open space between them, and bookmarked by the turnarounds on Vinsetta Boulevard. The Vinsetta Park subdivision layout was done by Mason L Brown & Sons – civil engineers in 1915. The bridges are shown on the plat plan with “X” marks.

The GPS coordinates are:

Bridge #1: Mayfield N 042 29.981 W 083 09.775

Bridge #2: Greenleaf N 042 30.021 W 083 09.737

Bridge #3: Woodsboro N 042 30.096 W 083 09.723

Bridge #4: Cedar Hill N 042 30.154 W 083 09.704

The legal boundary description as stated on the 2022 survey by Nowak & Fraus Engineers is included below. For ease of viewing the survey more closely, please use the following link:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1h4fBrIw0G2ACaOO\\_h9m-JGX1le6tR8-i/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1h4fBrIw0G2ACaOO_h9m-JGX1le6tR8-i/view?usp=sharing)

#### LEGAL DESCRIPTION

A PARCEL OF LAND BEING A PART OF VINSETTA BOULEVARD (150' WIDE) OF VINSETTA PARK SUBDIVISION AS RECORDED IN UBER 12 OF PLATS, ON PAGE 30, OAKLAND COUNTY RECORDS BEING PART OF SECTION 16, TOWN 1 NORTH, RANGE 11 EAST, ROYAL OAK TOWNSHIP (NOW CITY), OAKLAND COUNTY, MICHIGAN AND BEING MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS: COMMENCING AT THE NORTHERLY CORNER OF LOT 142 OF SAID VINSETTA PARK SUBDIVISION; THENCE SOUTH 32 DEGREES 53 MINUTES 00 SECONDS WEST, 146.20 FEET ALONG THE WESTERLY LINE OF SAID LOT 142 TO THE WESTERLY CORNER OF SAID LOT 142; THENCE NORTH 61 DEGREES 18 MINUTES 12 SECONDS WEST, 45.48 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING; THENCE 22.14 FEET ALONG THE ARC OF A CURVE TO THE RIGHT, HAVING A RADIUS OF 13.84 FEET, A CENTRAL ANGLE OF 91 DEGREES 36 MINUTES 51 SECONDS, AND A CHORD BEARING AND DISTANCE OF SOUTH 76 DEGREES 32 MINUTES 40 SECONDS WEST, 19.85 FEET; THENCE NORTH 66 DEGREES 12 MINUTES 38 SECONDS WEST, 19.45 FEET; THENCE 29.87 FEET ALONG THE ARC OF A CURVE TO THE RIGHT, HAVING A RADIUS OF 15.43 FEET, A CENTRAL ANGLE OF 110 DEGREES 54 MINUTES 35 SECONDS, AND A CHORD BEARING AND DISTANCE OF NORTH 22 DEGREES 43 MINUTES 03 SECONDS WEST, 25.42 FEET; THENCE NORTH 32 DEGREES 25 MINUTES 18 SECONDS EAST, 427.94 FEET; THENCE NORTH 32 DEGREES 19 MINUTES 11 SECONDS EAST, 43.47 FEET; THENCE NORTH 31 DEGREES 03 MINUTES 56 SECONDS EAST, 58.50 FEET; THENCE 262.47 FEET ALONG THE ARC OF A CURVE TO THE LEFT, HAVING A RADIUS OF 1044.67 FEET, A CENTRAL ANGLE OF 14 DEGREES 23 MINUTES 43 SECONDS, AND A CHORD BEARING AND DISTANCE OF NORTH 20 DEGREES 59 MINUTES 15 SECONDS EAST, 261.78 FEET; THENCE NORTH 13 DEGREES 40 MINUTES 18 SECONDS EAST, 47.06 FEET; THENCE NORTH 14 DEGREES 24 MINUTES 59 SECONDS EAST, 41.28 FEET; THENCE NORTH 12 DEGREES 40 MINUTES 55 SECONDS EAST, 123.79 FEET; THENCE 148.70 FEET ALONG THE ARC OF A CURVE TO THE LEFT, HAVING A RADIUS OF 611.11 FEET, A CENTRAL ANGLE OF 13 DEGREES 56 MINUTES 31 SECONDS, AND A CHORD BEARING AND DISTANCE OF NORTH 05 DEGREES 47 MINUTES 58 SECONDS EAST, 148.34 FEET; THENCE NORTH 05 DEGREES 16 MINUTES 46 SECONDS WEST, 37.94 FEET; THENCE

NORTH 07 DEGREES 55 MINUTES 24 SECONDS WEST, 61.99 FEET;  
THENCE NORTH 04 DEGREES 32 MINUTES 29 SECONDS WEST,  
29.58 FEET; THENCE 142.66 FEET ALONG THE ARC OF A CURVE TO  
THE RIGHT, HAVING A RADIUS OF 384.24 FEET, A CENTRAL ANGLE  
OF 21 DEGREES 16 MINUTES 23 SECONDS, AND A CHORD  
BEARING AND DISTANCE OF NORTH 12 DEGREES 47 MINUTES 37  
SECONDS EAST, 141.85 FEET; THENCE NORTH 23 DEGREES 56  
MINUTES 57 SECONDS EAST, 97.81 FEET; THENCE NORTH 27  
DEGREES 45 MINUTES 51 SECONDS EAST, 44.81 FEET; THENCE  
NORTH 29 DEGREES 04 MINUTES 09 SECONDS EAST, 44.57 FEET;  
THENCE NORTH 29 DEGREES 41 MINUTES 41 SECONDS EAST,  
360.90 FEET; THENCE NORTH 31 DEGREES 22 MINUTES 08  
SECONDS EAST, 40.53 FEET; THENCE 37.62 FEET ALONG THE ARC  
OF A CURVE TO THE RIGHT, HAVING A RADIUS OF 39.00 FEET, A  
CENTRAL ANGLE OF 55 DEGREES 15 MINUTES 43 SECONDS, AND A  
CHORD BEARING AND DISTANCE OF NORTH 62 DEGREES 12  
MINUTES 52 SECONDS EAST, 36.18 FEET; THENCE 26.60 FEET  
ALONG THE ARC OF A CURVE TO THE RIGHT, HAVING A RADIUS OF  
37.39 FEET, A CENTRAL ANGLE OF 40 DEGREES 45 MINUTES 47  
SECONDS, AND A CHORD BEARING AND DISTANCE OF SOUTH 60  
DEGREES 35 MINUTES 45 SECONDS EAST, 26.04 FEET; THENCE  
39.96 FEET ALONG THE ARC OF A CURVE TO THE RIGHT, HAVING A  
RADIUS OF 33.64 FEET, A CENTRAL ANGLE OF 68 DEGREES 04  
MINUTES 32 SECONDS, AND A CHORD BEARING A DISTANCE OF  
SOUTH 04 DEGREES 08 MINUTES 06 SECONDS EAST, 37.65 FEET;  
THENCE SOUTH 30 DEGREES 18 MINUTES 15 SECONDS WEST,  
405.36 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 30 DEGREES 46 MINUTES 24  
SECONDS WEST, 38.50 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 30 DEGREES 09  
MINUTES 42 SECONDS WEST, 99.84 FEET; THENCE 137.28 FEET  
ALONG THE ARC OF A CURVE TO THE LEFT, HAVING A RADIUS OF  
199.87 FEET, A CENTRAL ANGLE OF 39 DEGREES 21 MINUTES 12  
SECONDS, AND A CHORD BEARING AND DISTANCE OF SOUTH 14  
DEGREES 43 MINUTES 40 SECONDS WEST, 134.60 FEET; THENCE  
SOUTH 05 DEGREES 13 MINUTES 14 SECONDS EAST, 59.65 FEET;  
THENCE SOUTH 06 DEGREES 05 MINUTES 09 SECONDS EAST,  
51.81 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 00 DEGREES 35 MINUTES 35  
SECONDS WEST, 31.72 FEET; THENCE 245.32 FEET ALONG THE  
ARC OF A CURVE TO THE RIGHT, HAVING A RADIUS OF 1500.67  
FEET, A CENTRAL ANGLE OF 09 DEGREES 21 MINUTES 59  
SECONDS, AND A CHORD BEARING AND DISTANCE OF SOUTH 05  
DEGREES 16 MINUTES 19 SECONDS WEST, 245.05 FEET; THENCE  
SOUTH 10 DEGREES 37 MINUTES 42 SECONDS WEST, 43.35 FEET;  
THENCE SOUTH 12 DEGREES 02 MINUTES 44 SECONDS WEST,  
63.94 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 12 DEGREES 11 MINUTES 29 SECONDS  
WEST, 17.73 FEET; THENCE 347.15 FEET ALONG THE ARC OF A  
CURVE TO THE RIGHT, HAVING A RADIUS OF 1216.67 FEET, A



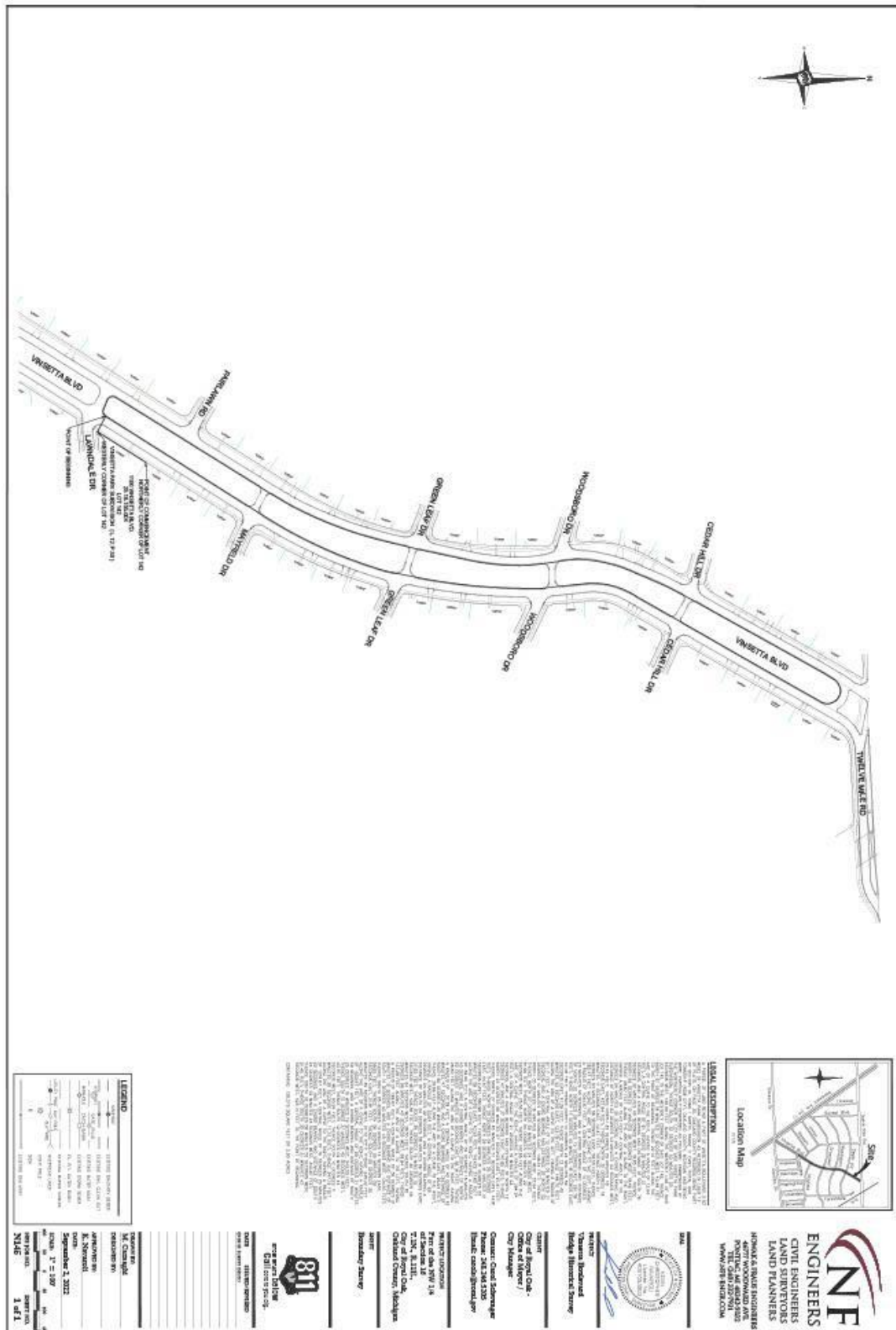
Vinsetta Bridges Historic District - Preliminary Report

CENTRAL ANGLE OF 16 DEGREES 20 MINUTES 53 SECONDS, AND A CHORD BEARING AND DISTANCE OF SOUTH 23 DEGREES 52 MINUTES 24 SECONDS WEST, 345.97 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 32 DEGREES 56 MINUTES 55 SECONDS WEST, 51.45 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 32 DEGREES 51 MINUTES 42 SECONDS WEST, 425.14 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING.

CONTAINING: 126,275 SQUARE FEET OR 2.90 ACRES

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# Vinsetta Bridges Historic District - Preliminary Report



Survey, Nowak & Fraus Engineers, 2022

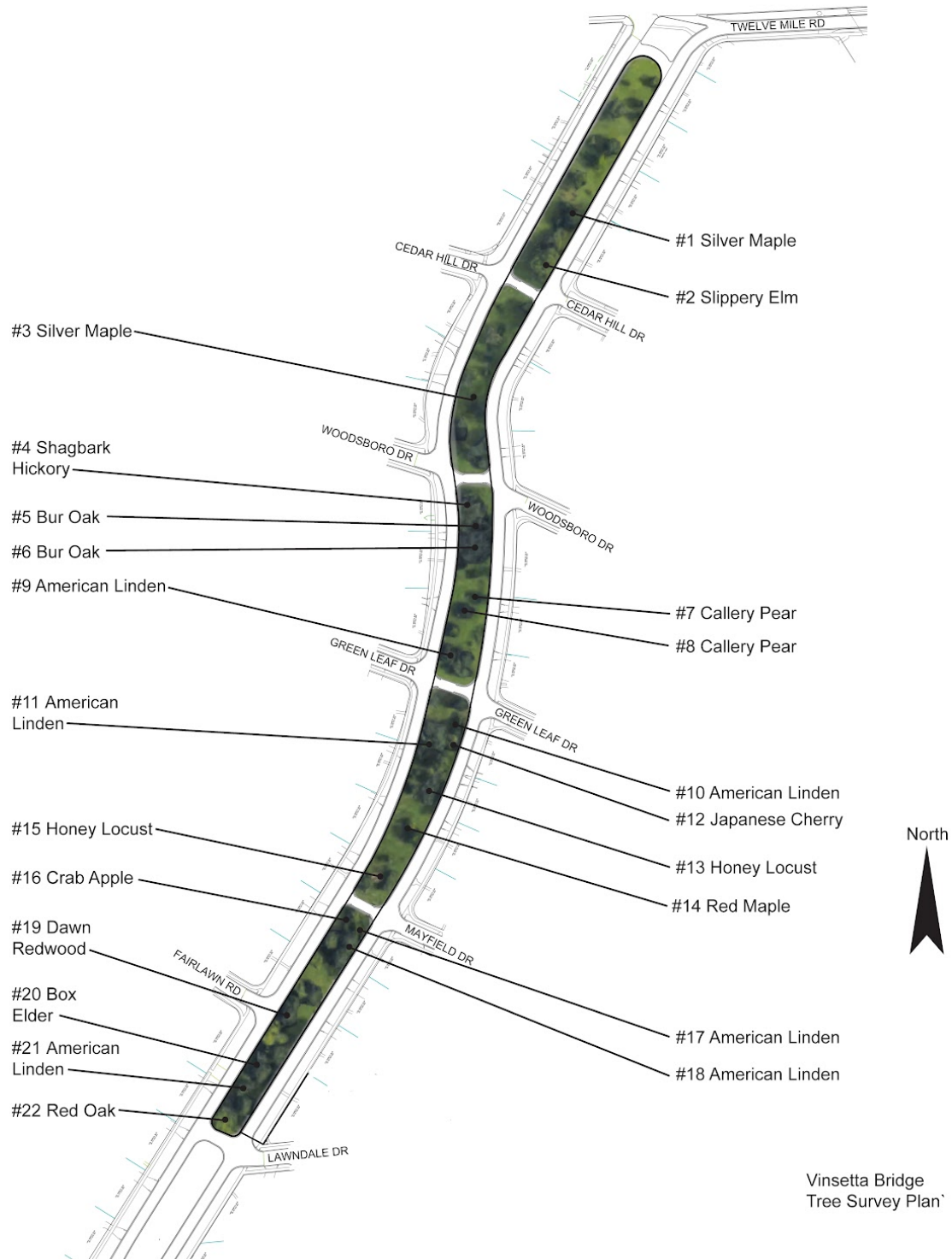


## Visual Boundary Description

### Vinsetta Bridges



## Vinsetta Bridges Historic District - Preliminary Report



*Vinsetta Bridges Tree Survey Plan by Vasilios Derdelakos, 2023*

*The integrity of the district is maintained due to the variety and placement of trees along the median, corresponding to the intent to create a parklike setting for the subdivision and the influence of the Garden City Movement.*

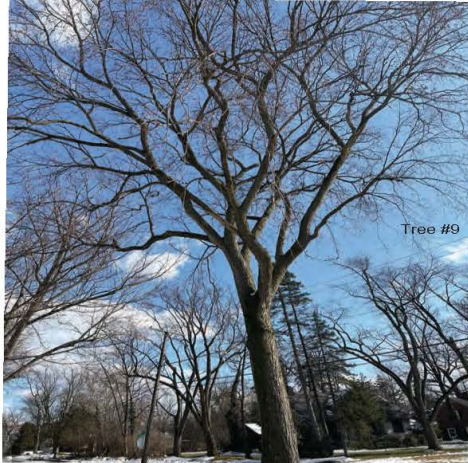


## Vinsetta Bridges Historic District - Preliminary Report



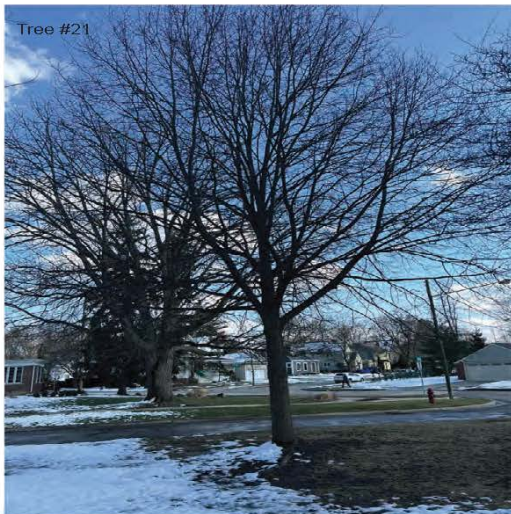


## Vinsetta Bridges Historic District - Preliminary Report





## Vinsetta Bridges Historic District - Preliminary Report



## Boundary Justification

The boundary of the proposed Vinsetta Bridges Historic District is based on the significance, integrity, and physical setting of the Boulevard. The significance is the boulevard design by the civil engineering company; Mason L. Brown & Son Civil Engineers. The integrity of the bridges is intact, very little has been done to the bridges from when they were first built. There have been a few bridge repairs by concerned citizens. The municipality has only repaired the road, leaving the bridge maintenance alone. The physical setting of the proposed district consists of the boulevard meridian containing the bridges and landscape. The open space between the bridges connects the overall district physically and visually. The open space landscape consists of trees, bushes, and lawn. The landscape connecting the bridges are integral to the proposed district. The grand houses on each side of the boulevard have a view to the picturesque garden and bridges of the meridian. The view of meridian and bridges from the grand houses on Vinsetta Boulevard is significant as this was the selling point of the subdivision, to create a park-like, upscale place to live. In fact, that goal was reached with the green space and romantically designed bridge. A bucolic view.

## History of the Proposed District

Royal Oak in 1916 was still a village but had aspirations to City status. Its village roots are evident in an item in the August *Royal Oak Tribune* of an oncoming "Firemen Field Day" which would feature a running race between "Senate," a racing Goose, and any challenger who would not be bothered by the prospect of losing a foot race to a goose. Another sign of the times is displayed in a small ad that reads, "For Sale: Cheap. A fine driving mare, 16 hands high and 5 years. Will sell on account of buying a truck." And then in April of 1916, the *Royal Oak Tribune* reported that the Sadler and Kean families of Lincoln Avenue had been frantic with worry when three daughters, aged 7, 7 and 5, failed to come home by dinner time after leaving early in the morning. The girls had followed the Red Run south, gathering pussy willows, stopping finally in Highland Park to see a relative. A Highland Park police car brought them home around 7 p.m.

Royal Oak was advancing from a 1910 population of 1,072 to what became in 1920 a population of 6,007. And Royal Oak, like the rest of the world, was becoming increasingly aware of job opportunities down Woodward at the Highland Park Ford plant, a short ride on the Interurban, the Interurban being the Detroit United Railway (DUR), a conglomeration of railways formed in 1901. The DUR allowed access between Detroit and small towns in southeast Michigan relatively quickly and efficiently. The DUR was abandoned in the 1920s due to the rise of the automobile.

Royal Oak's housing needs would gain the attention of Arthur F. Bassett, a mortgage broker, and his business partner George Jay Vinton, who headed Vinton and Company, a large contracting firm in Detroit founded in 1858 by Walter A. Vinton, George Jay's father. Arthur F. and George Jay acquired a 155 acre tract of land in Sections 16 and 17 of Royal Oak Township. This land had been obtained in a trade with the Oakland Place Land Company for a 3 story apartment building located in Detroit at 1025 Jefferson and \$40,000.

Apparently good friends as well as partners, in 1904 Arthur F. and Elizabeth Bassett would grant the land just north of theirs to George Jay and Rosa Vinton so that someday they could be next door neighbors. The Bassetts had moved their home (now



1724 Bassett) the year before from its previous location on the west side of Woodward in what is today Berkley. The move was done late during a cold winter night so the Interurban could be taken down to accommodate the transfer.

Some time in the 1904-1908 time frame, George Jay Vinton would build his country home next to the Bassett home on what was then 1826 Woodward. Originally designed to be a summer home, eventually Robert K. Vinton, George Jay's son, would move his family into that house as a permanent residence. The real estate parcel was then called Vinsetta Farm.

Local legend reports the Bassett and Vinton wives came up with this novel name, Vinsetta (spelled in early news reports "Vincetta"). They amalgamated George Jay's "Vin-" with Arthur's "-sett-" to form this new word, Vinsetta. The first recorded use of this novel word in the local press was in September 1907.

The collaborative relationship between the two families survived the deaths of George Jay Vinton in late 1910 and the death of Arthur F. Bassett in 1916. Arthur F. Bassett Jr. would conduct his loan, real estate and insurance business out of an office on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor of the majestic Vinton Building in Detroit, a building designed by Albert Kahn for Robert K. Vinton at the intersection of Woodward and Congress. Robert K. would serve as Vice-President of the Washington Square Building while his friend Arthur F. Bassett, Jr. would serve as President.

The entity known as "Vinsetta Land Company" was created in 1915. It consisted of the 150 acre tract of land, except for the two houses on Woodward. This lovely little river valley had as its centerpiece what was then called "Red Run Creek" or "Little Run." The waterway that runs down what is called Vinsetta today is, according to local historian Bob Muller, sourced from a large watershed of two large cranberry marshes nearby in Huntington Woods. The marsh in spring became a temporary lake stretching from about 8 Mile Rd. to about Catalpa. After the Civil War, steam powered dredges were used to dig a deep drain that followed Wyoming through Huntington Woods, crossing Woodward south of Catalpa, following the path the Boulevard follows today to just west of Crooks. This channel was cut deeper to drain into what is sometimes referred to as the Hubbard Drain.

Developers at this time were influenced by the Garden City School of Town Planning that had been advanced by the English city planner Ebenezer Howard in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Garden City philosophy rejected the grid pattern of streets and envisioned a landscape of curving streets, irregular lots, reduced population density and much green space. It was a general rejection of "crowded, unhealthy cities" that was part and parcel of the era's Progressive Movement and its embrace of open spaces such as Frederick Olmstead's Central Park and his design of Belle Isle Park in Detroit. The Progressive planner wished to re-imagine urban spaces as free of the ills of industrial society.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>, there was also a popular architectural and urban planning school of thought called the City Beautiful Movement. City Beautiful was a manifestation of the Progressive Era's social reforms and is associated with designs in Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Kansas City and Washington. D.C. The Movement sought to promote beauty but also civic and moral virtue, believing that urban beauty promoted a harmonious social order. Some thinkers

of the time were not impressed – the famous social reformer, Jane Addams, referred to the City Beautiful Movement as “an architectural design cult.”

The City Beautiful Movement borrowed from the Beaux Arts and Neoclassical philosophies. It held fast to the belief that state-led beautification gave legitimacy to government at this time of social disturbance. The Movement was very influential in Washington, D.C. In the design of the National Mall and the Union Station. Daniel Burnham, Augustus Saint Gaudens and Frederick Law Olmstead all played a part in Washington, D.C.'s design.

To implement this desired Garden City effect would require the services of a trained Landscape Architect. To take on such an ambitious project, an accomplished Civil Engineer/Landscape Architect would be needed. Mason L. Brown was hired. Mr. Brown was acquainted with Arthur Bassett as noted in a *Detroit News* article dated March 13, 1913 stating that he was hired to make “elaborate landscaping improvement at his [Bassett's] newly purchased farm in Royal Oak.” Clearly Brown proved himself a good choice to design Vinsetta Park.

Mason L. Brown was born in Perry, Maine in July of 1864. Educated at MIT, he began practice as a Civil Engineer in Boston. He arrived in Detroit at the age of 21 and married a widow by the name of Mrs. Marie Brown (Vanier) in 1889. They had five children.

During his career in Detroit, Mason constructed Woodlawn, Forest Lawn and Holy Cross cemeteries in Detroit as well as summer resorts in Traverse City, a State Industrial Home in Adrian, MI and sewers in Coldwater and Wyandotte, MI. He served as Municipal Engineer in Wyandotte, Grosse Pointe Farms and River Rouge, MI. He also designed eleven different lines of electric railways in Michigan, Ohio and New York State.

An ad for Brown's firm in the 1895-1896 Michigan Business Directory notes he specialized in the design of parks, cemeteries and private estates. Brown's designs are on the National Register of Historic Places including Woodlawn Cemetery in Detroit and Elm Lawn Cemetery in Bay City. A project as ambitious as Vinsetta called for a man of his skill set.

At the center of his new project lay the “Run,” an Old English noun that means a watercourse. In fact, several waterways in the area are called Red Run, including the site of a 1763 battle fought by the Odawa war chief Pontiac against French settlers in Detroit. With respect to local history, this report shall continue to refer to this particular waterway as “Red Run.” One of the original Royal Oak pioneers Hamlet Harris, an African-American who brought his wife out of slavery, was baptized in this waterway on a cold January morning in 1839. As distinguished as its history is, however, this stream was imprisoned in 1926 in a 15-foot wide concrete pipe through which the Red Run still courses, below those bridges.

So Mason Brown's assignment was 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 would be compatible with the Garden City philosophy. His proposed Boulevard would follow the course of the Run with five bridges spanning, all the width of a single auto. Local legend has it that the Model T was used to determine the width of the bridges. One of those original five

bridges, spanning the creek less than 300 feet east of Woodward was taken down, reason unknown. No trace remains.

The neighborhood was platted in the fall of 1915 soon after the Vinsetta Land Company was formed by Arthur Bassett Jr., R.G. Lambrecht and Sherman Callender in June of that year. Construction commenced soon after as a June 1916 *Detroit News* ad welcoming buyers mentions phone, sewer, walks, electric lights and water are “now being installed.”

So by 1916, an ad for Lambrecht, Kelly and Company gently teased:

Picture yourself in a snug bungalow on a lot 100 by 180 with a beautiful lawn, shrubs and flowers all around. Room, too, for a garden if you wish. Have you not thought of the joy of building your home close to nature and still enjoy the improvements of the city?

Mr. Brown decided to span the Red Run with five bridges, the first bridge, since destroyed, just east of Woodward, the others at Mayfield, at Greenleaf, at Woodsboro and at Cedar Hill. The bridges themselves were part of the woodsy charm that appealed to new residents. When construction began is hard to ascertain precisely but a *Daily Tribune* story dated December 17, 1915 details the death of a 42 year old laborer named John Boffo who was “struck and instantly killed by a southbound freight train at the Vinsetta crossing of the Grand Trunk.” Mr. Boffo was an employee of the N.A. Woods Construction Company and had been “engaged in building a new bridge on a Royal Oak subdivision.” So apparently construction had begun by December of the same year the Vinsetta acreage had been platted. The Vinsetta Land Company was moving forward with all deliberate speed. The June 3, 1916 edition of the *Detroit News* announced “Opening Day” of what was now called “Vinsetta Park,” complete with directions to the site and its Lambrecht, Kelly and Company land office.

According to trade practice and Michigan law, bridges with a clear span of over 30 feet must be engineered. Although the Vinsetta bridges have a clear span under 30 feet, the quality of the bridges would certainly indicate a knowledgeable and qualified contractor was hired. The four bridges that cross Vinsetta Boulevard are all made from the same concrete form and are the same size. They can be described as reinforced concrete arched short span bridges and represent one of the earlier forms of this type of bridge. The style can be described as Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Neo-Grecian.

The bridges represent a single span reinforced concrete closed spandrel arch. There are reinforced concrete abutments securing the bridge to the ground. On top of the arched superstructure is the reinforced concrete structure for the road with sidewalls, called parapets or guard rails. The road construction gives the bridge a slight arch which gives the road “a hump.” This results in two spring lines to the bridges, one spring line and radius for the arch and a different spring and radius line for the road bridge.

The length of the road portion of the bridge is 28’3” and the roadway width is 16’. The clear span of the arch is 20’. The parapet sidewalls are 2’6” tall and 6” thick. There are three decorative concrete inset panels bookended by plain concrete pilasters. The parapet is topped off by a slight arched concrete cap.

Atop the bridges are remains of what was electric wiring for electrical lamps which illuminated the short roadways. A 1923 photo shows lamps atop the bridges.

What is uncertain is whether these lamps were the same height as the residential street lighting but contemporary photos strongly hint they were. Surviving street lights from that era are 8 1/2 foot high with a 20 inch cap. Residents today have suggested those lamps should be replaced with solar lamps.

The appeal of the Vinsetta Bridges is that they are a reminder of Royal Oak's rural past. They are an appealing anachronism. From a traffic engineer's point of view, they make no sense. They are difficult to keep clear of snow, they are too narrow, there have been several collisions by careless drivers. But the Vinsetta Park community loves its bridges.

And there is an undeniable romance to the story of the Vinsetta Bridges. The one way bridges, the leafy suburb, the winding country road. Born of a desire to have urban comforts close to your home in the country, the vision of the Vinsetta Land Company must have been quite compelling. 1920 was, after all, the year the decennial census revealed that the U.S. had become over 50 percent urbanized for the first time. Mason Brown's application of the Garden City philosophy entertained a certain nostalgia for days gone by.

Now it cannot be denied that Vinsetta Park was designed for the upper class. A June 1915 ad illustrates this when it proclaims that "the highest types of Detroit's business and professional man want you for his neighbor." The middle and working class would have to be content with a home on the grid pattern of urban design. The grid may not be pastoral but it is economical.

But the Bassetts, the Vintons and Mason Brown were not looking to upend society or to change the world. They simply wanted to create a small tidy community, a place of quiet beauty where a worker could come home to rest with his family. Vinsetta Park, complete with its pastoral bridges, remains that to this day. Thus the Vinsetta bridges meet Criterion A for historic significance as defined by the National Register of Historic Places because of their association with a renowned landscape architect and civil engineer such as Mason L. Brown. The Vinsetta bridges are an illustration of Mr. Brown's fluency in expressing the ideals of the Progressive Movement and its articulation of the Garden City School of Town Planning. This philosophy saw community design as part of a larger social reform that would be part of a transformation of the American cityscape. That the bridges remain a centerpiece of a still vibrant Vinsetta Park community is a tribute to that Progressive Movement and that very transformation.

### **Statement of Significance**

As regards the criteria for evaluation concerning the quality of significance present in these bridges and the property contiguous to them, the Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee maintains that the bridges meet the requirements to meet the standards cited in three categories:

Criterion A: Association with a significant event or pattern of history

- 1) Pattern of development along the Woodward corridor north of Detroit
- 2) The influence of the Interurban Railway as a mode of transportation along Woodward to Pontiac and beyond
- 3) The influence of the Garden City Movement of the early 1900s and its impact

on residential design

Criterion B: Association with a significant person

Mason L. Brown (1864-1918) was a renowned civil engineer with expertise in water supply, sewerage and drainage systems who also specialized in the design of parks, cemeteries and private estates. Brown's designs are on the National Register of Historic Places including Woodlawn Cemetery in Detroit and Elm Lawn Cemetery in Bay City.

Criterion C: Design and construction

The four existing bridges crossing Vinsetta Boulevard are all the same; matching design, size, construction and materials. They are unique in the City of Royal Oak and arguably Oakland County.



## Photographs



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



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



Vinsetta Bridges Historic District - Preliminary Report



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



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



Vinsetta Bridges Historic District - Preliminary Report



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



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



Vinsetta Bridges Historic District - Preliminary Report



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



Vinsetta Bridges Historic District - Preliminary Report



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



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





*View under and through the Cedar Hill bridge, June 16, 2022. The distance from the bridge road bed to pipe that contains the Red Run is approximately 3-4'. The arch of the bridge to carry traffic over the river is still intact and functions. The original span is still present.*

### **Resource Count and Percentage**

The integrity of Vinsetta Boulevard is high. The concrete bridges crossing the boulevard were built circa 1916. The bridges remain in the same location on the boulevard. When the bridges were built it was of high standard of workmanship. Very little maintenance has occurred since 1916 and they remain in fair condition, a testament to their integrity. The only missing element are the lamps at each end of the bridge piers. The humped arched bridges fit in with the picturesque setting of the landscaped median. The median with its open green landscape and bridges provides a wide vista bucolic view to the residential area as well as anchoring it in time and place in history.

The Vinsetta Bridges and Boulevard are more than 50 years old. The boulevard median and bridges are 98% intact. The only missing element is the light fixtures at the end of the parapet side walls, which are replaceable. The bridges retain their integrity, 100% contributing to the proposed district.

### **Lists of Historic and Non-Historic Properties**

Bridge #1: Mayfield & Vinsetta      Geographic location: N 042 29.981 W 083 09.775  
Bridge #2: Greenleaf & Vinsetta      Geographic location: N 042 30.021 W 083 09.737  
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### **Bibliography**

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*Detroit Free Press*

*The Detroit News*

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## Appendix

# Bassett Family



Arthur Bassett (17JAN1851-11APR1916)  
Born in Lenawee Co. Michigan to parents Nehemiah and  
Mary (Foster) Bassett



Elizabeth C Fancher (9SEP1858-20NOV1945)  
Born in Detroit, Michigan to parents Loren and Bridget Rachel  
(McGraw) Fancher

Arthur and Elizabeth married 14NOV1883 in Detroit, Michigan

### Children:

- Gilbert L Bassett (24AUG1884-5JUL1940) never married; no occupation but listed as a gardener in 1918, employed by his mother
- Arthur F Bassett Jr (9JUN1893-2JAN1982) married Jessie Irene Lyon (22JAN1894-UNK) on 19JUN1917
  - Elizabeth M
  - Margaret J
  - Nancy E
  - Arthur F
  - Ruth A

# Vinton Family



George Jay Vinton (10AUG1859-23DEC1910)  
Born in Detroit, Michigan to parents Warren G and Jane E  
(Putnam) Vinton



Rose B King (14DEC1859-15JAN1931)  
Born in Brooklyn, New York to parents Robert and Sarah  
(Presswood) King

George Jay and Rose married 31OCT1883 in Detroit

Children:

- Warren J (30DEC1889-1970) married Dorothea Jones 19SEP1911 and Gladys Ogden 20JAN1938 and Mary E Perkins 19DEC1940
- Robert King (9ARP1892-13JUL1969) married Marion Grace Fikes (22JAN1894-UNK) in 9OCT1914
- Donald Presswood (7OCT1895-5NOV1963) married Mary C Lane 4SEP1923
- Elizabeth (8JUN1900-4Jun1982) married Burrell Hoyt 21OCT1923 and Keith J Rankin 18SEP1931 Keith J Rankin



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The Type of Men  
You Will Be Associated With

The Secretary and Treasurer of the largest manufacturers of automobile motors in the world.

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**No Matter What Your Tastes May Be The Site of Your Ideal Home is Here**

Two beautiful adjoining estates—the grand old Vinton and Bessett homesteads—are now united to form **Vinsetta Park**. And no matter what your tastes may be the site of your ideal home is here.

If the open country holds charms for you it is here galore. If you prefer the woods make your choice in the virgin forest which covers entire sections of the estates.

**Improvements Now Under Way**  
—Guaranteed by Contract

A network of curving concrete boulevards, decorated with an ornamental lighting system, will link every site in the colony with the Twelve-Mile Road on one hand—and the magnificent Red Run Golf Club within a short distance on the other.

Telephone, sewers, walks, electric lights and water service are now being installed—the churches and schools of Royal Oak are but a few minutes' pleasant walk.

And yet with all the advantages of modern living **Vinsetta Park** still has the seclusion which makes home truly home.

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**Sunday, June 4th**

Just drive out Woodward Ave. or take Pontiac car to Canfield. Drive 11 1/2 Mile Road and enter grounds at office shown below.

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Call Main 2325 or mail a Postcard for beautifully colored Brochure showing Artistic Landscape Plan—and describing Property fully.

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MEMBERS DETROIT REAL ESTATE BOARD DETROIT, MICH.

50 Minutes by Interurban-Pontiac Car  
35 Minutes by Motor  
from Grand Circus Park



1916 advertisement for the Vinsetta Park subdivision, The Detroit News



Vinsetta Bridges Historic District - Preliminary Report



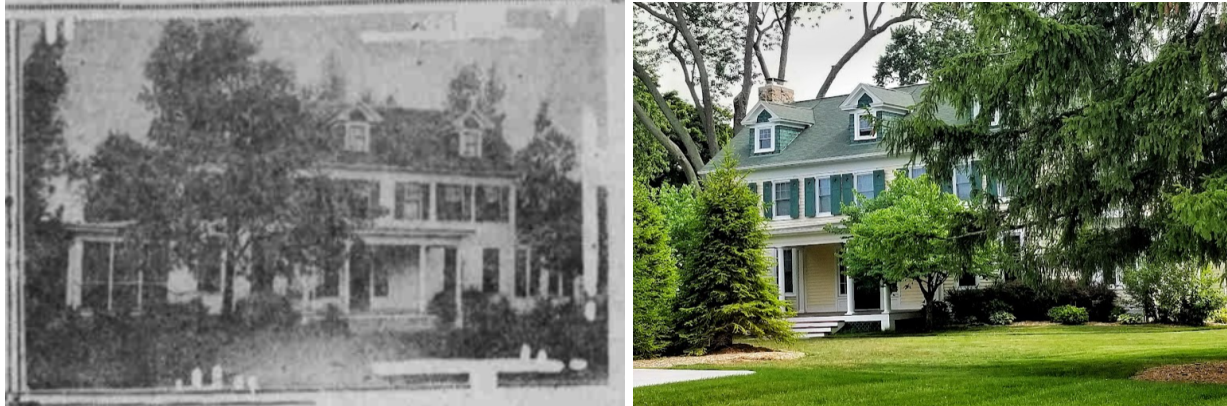
*1923 aerial view of Vinsetta Boulevard, Detroit Public Library*



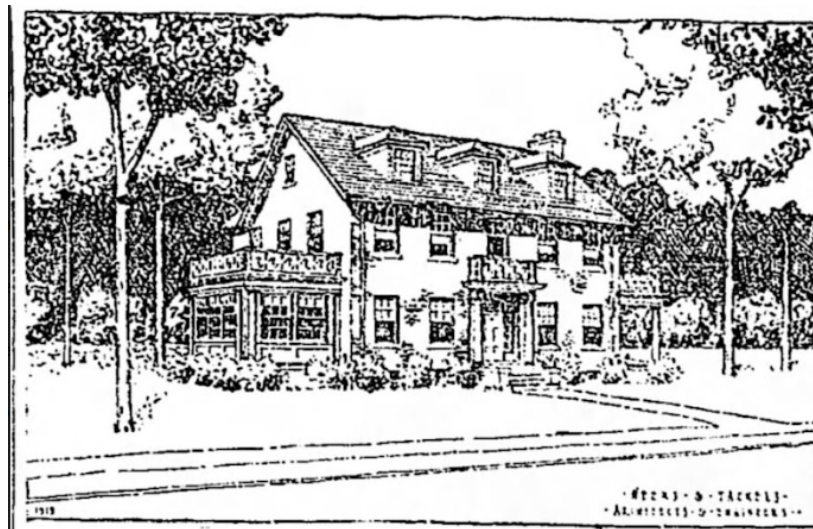
*1923 photo of one Vinsetta bridge with home in the background, The Detroit News*

### **Vinsetta Park Homes**

The bridges are surrounded by Vinsetta Park Subdivision, a diverse collection of grand 20<sup>th</sup> century homes built of several styles, over many decades. Styles include English Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival, Arts & Crafts, Dutch Colonial Revival, Cape Cod Revival, Midcentury Modern, Ranch, and Minimal Traditional.



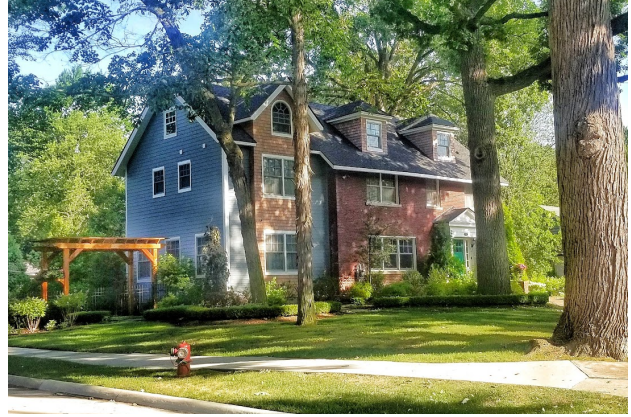
*1724 Bassett Road, The Basset Home, colonial revival style built c.1860s relocated from SW corner of Woodward Ave and Catalpa Dr (Detroit Free Press, 1923, HDSC 2022)*



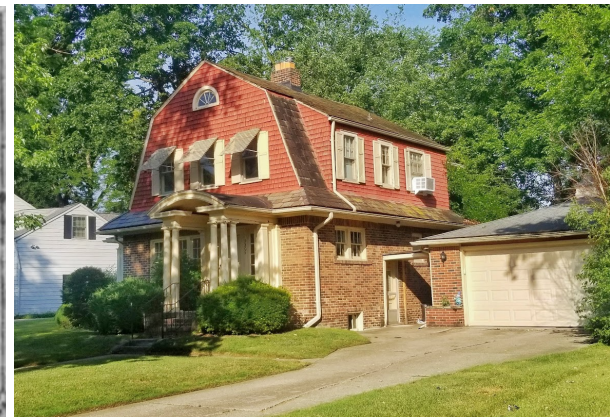
*1417 Vinsetta Boulevard, colonial revival style built c.1921 for A.F. Bassett Jr by architect Harry F. Weeks of Weeks & Tackles cost of \$18,000 (Detroit News, 1919)*



Vinsetta Bridges Historic District - Preliminary Report

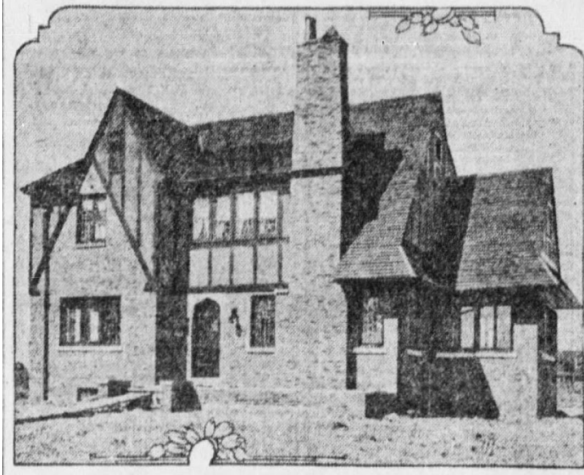


*1507 Vinsetta Boulevard, built in 1922 in the colonial revival style for Charles J. Matt (Detroit Free Press, 1923, HDSC 2022)*



*1305 Vinsetta Boulevard, Dutch colonial revival style, built in 1922 for Carl Wisner, vice-president of the American Loan and Trust Company (Detroit Free Press, 1923, HDSC 2022)*

Vinsetta Bridges Historic District - Preliminary Report



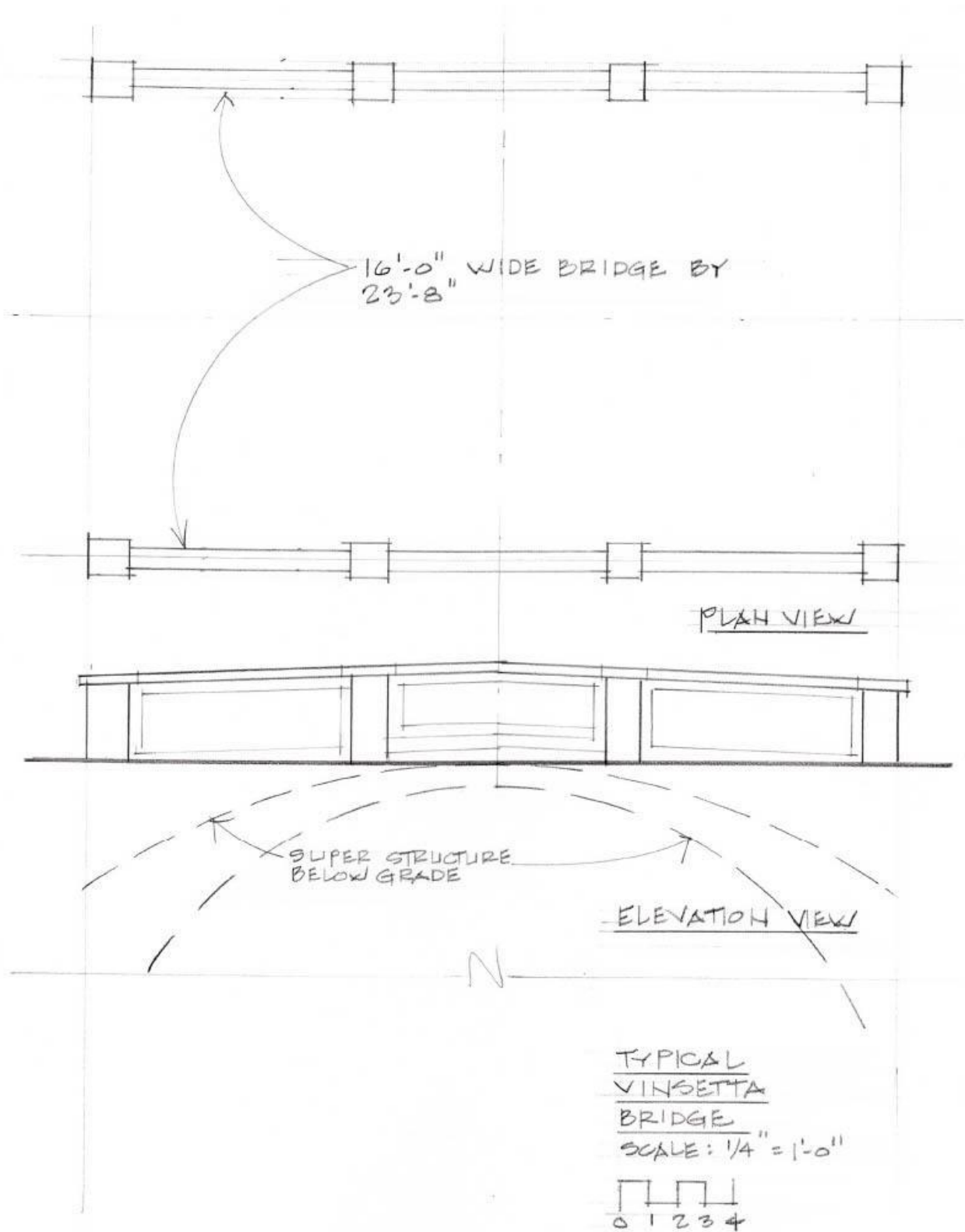
1525 Vinsetta Boulevard, "The Buckingham" English Tudor revival style, built in 1926 by Miller-Storm Company for Dr. A.P. Ohlmacher for \$25,000 (Detroit Free Press 1927, HDSC 2022)



1806 Cedar Hill, A Bassett Smith sponsored home. Built 1927 English Tudor Revival Style (Detroit News 1927, Detroit Free Press 1930, HDSC 2022)



Vinsetta Bridges Historic District - Preliminary Report



2022 Vinsetta Bridge drawing based on field measurements and historic photograph, Tammis Donaldson/Ekocite Architecture





*Original Vinsetta Bridge lamppost c. 1920, relocated to 1507 Woodsboro Drive, photo by Rob Duchene, 2022*