

Rochester Hills Museum



at Van Hoosen Farm

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



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46 years of Community Engagement

From its founding, the Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm has been a story of community and collaboration.

The Van Hoosen Farmhouse was gifted by Dr. Sarah Van Hoosen Jones to Michigan State University (MSU) in 1954 allowing Sarah to remain in her family's ancestral home until her death in 1972.

In 1979, several visionary local chapters of the Questers started a petition drive requesting that MSU donate the 1840 Van Hoosen Farmhouse and 3 acres to our community to create a local history museum.

Over the years, the Museum has expanded to include the 1840 Van Hoosen Farmhouse, the 1850 Red House, several buildings making up the Van Hoosen Barn complex, the nearby 1848 Stoney Creek Schoolhouse, surrounded by 16 acres. Each building and the surrounding historic landscape, have been carefully preserved and shared with our community.



“ This has been a journey of hope, risk, family, love, collaboration, dedication, perseverance, and loyalty. The results are impressive. Enjoy our community engagement efforts! **”**

Mission & Core Responsibilities

Mission

The Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm is part of the Department of Parks and Natural Resources in the City of Rochester Hills.

The Department mission statement is:

We build connections in our community, Neighbor to Neighbor; Neighbor to Nature; and Neighbor to History. We do this by preserving our history, conserving our green infrastructure, and engaging our community in the outdoors.

The Museum mission statement is:

To enhance understanding of the past through interpreting, preserving and collecting the history of the greater Rochester area for present and future generations.

Core Responsibilities

1. Maintain and preserve our historic buildings and grounds that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
2. Provide a broad range of exceptional and innovative cultural, educational, and recreational programs.
3. Organize, acquire, and protect archives and collections and make them available to our community.
4. Promote community engagement by providing Museum resources and facilities that support residents' interests and activities.

Museum at a Glance

3

New bridges across our mill race providing full access to the Museum grounds

440

Museum Members

29,666

Vehicles entering the park and Museum site

\$1 million

Deposited in the Museum Endowment Fund since its creation in 1991

10

Wedding Ceremonies

432

Archive Volunteer Hours

800

New items entered into our PastPerfect Museum Collections Software

173

Photography Sessions booked

124

Community Events Hosted Free of charge



Update: Buildings & Grounds

1. Maintain and preserve our historic buildings and grounds that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places

- Replaced three footbridges that cross our millrace.
- Continued removal of invasive plant material on the Museum grounds.
- Improved landscape sight lines to match archival photographs through continued brush removal near Stoney Creek and the mill race.
- Removed an American Elm at the Van Hoosen Farmhouse that was damaged in a summer storm. It will be replaced with a new cultivar to help preserve the historic landscape at our site.
- Installed a new exterior drinking fountain in the Children's Garden that is ADA compliant and includes a dog water bowl.
- Installed exterior interpretive sign installed about Stoney Creek Stream.
- The Calf Barn received multiple upgrades:
 - 18 new light fixtures
 - 2 new drop down screens
 - 2 New LED projectors
 - Exterior of building painted
- Repainted six interpretive signs on Riverwalk in downtown Rochester.
- Repainted concrete floors throughout the Dairy Barn.
- The upstairs closet in the Red House had extensive ceiling and wall repairs and was repainted.
- New gutters were added to the Dairy Barn to prevent water and ice from falling on our HVAC unit.
- In collaboration with the Rochester Garden Club and local beekeepers we maintained beehives to support environmental education requests.



Update: Public Programs

2. Provide a broad range of exceptional and innovative cultural, educational, and recreational programs

School Field Trips

- 4,440 students from 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade within the Rochester Community Schools visited the Museum. Curriculum ranged from developing critical thinking skills through primary/secondary resources to understanding what makes a community, both past and present. Students visit 4 different historic buildings, and explore local downtown district of Rochester, Michigan.
- Over 20 individual coordinators from pre-K to college, private, public, homeschool, Girl Scouts, senior center and more reached out and asked for tailored educational, immersive experiences for their students. This brought an additional 700+ curious minds to the Museum grounds.



Throughout the Community

- The Museum staff provided off-site programs at the Adams High School Gold Rush, OPC Social and Activity Center, Bellbrook Senior Center, Blossom Ridge Senior Center, Pomeroy Living, Michigan Museum Association Conference, and Packard Proving Ground. We participated in local celebrations, such as the Christmas Parade where the Museum Manager was honored as the Grand Marshal.
- The Museum helped in the research and editing of a play script for the three-person theatrical performance “Three Needles and Suture.” This play was commissioned by the Lorenzo Cultural Center, in conjunction with a Women’s history exhibit. It tells the story of the Van Hoosen women. The Museum hosted 2 sold out performances.
- The Museum Staff provided consultation services to the Rochester Downtown Development Authority, offering ideas for adding history displays into their new Farmer’s Market building slated for 2026. Staff also consulted with Moceri Companies to help design the inside of the 1870s Grain Elevator as it is being converted from a business into a community space. Both are slated as spaces that our downtown walking tours can utilize.

Update: Public Programs

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2. Provide a broad range of exceptional and innovative cultural, educational, and recreational programs

General Programming

- Five issues of *The Museum Visitor* were published that list local research and program information.
- Our annual events include Wet and Wild Wednesdays, Garden Walk, Stone Wall Pumpkin Festival, Halloween Masquerade, A Visit with Santa & Mrs. Claus, Old-Fashioned Christmas, and Model Trains.
- To reach diverse audiences, we offered a range of programs:
 - Walking tours of Mt. Avon Cemetery, Bloomer Park, and downtown Rochester in collaboration with Rochester's Downtown Development Authority's Farmer's Market
 - Nature-based options focusing on stream science, pollinators, and historical use of natural resources
 - Evening film and speaker series –Friday nights in February and March
 - Summer camps, tea programs, vintage base ball, downtown Rochester bike rides, and more!



Update: Archives and Collections

3. Collect, protect and share the thousands of historical items in the Museum's archives and collections

Collect

- The Museum received a large collection of handmade clothing from the family of Gail Kemler.
- Local resident Bruce Austin turned over his research on the Clinton-Kalamazoo Canal to the Museum's archives.
- The Rochester Adams High school soccer coach provided us with archival material celebrating their two state championships last year.
- Two chairs originally from the Van Hoosen family made their way back home to the Van Hoosen Farmhouse! The great niece of Alice Serrell donated them to the Museum and they are now on display in the Farmhouse Library.
- A new project to update People records on PastPerfect began. Local historian Deborah Larsen helped to initiate this project by sharing biographical information on local people from her research.
- Processing work began on the Marye Miller Collection, which contains over 20 boxes of material from the OPC's founding director.



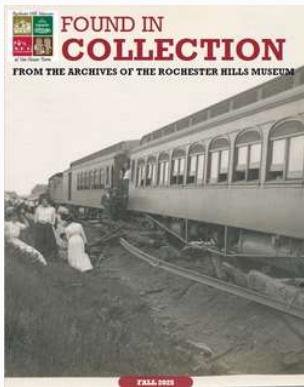
Protect

- Museum staff sent out the willow rocking chair for repair and it is now back on display in the Van Hoosen Farmhouse.
- The Museum's Chinese rugs received cleaning and repairs.
- Sarah Van Hoosen Jones' bedroom in the Van Hoosen Farmhouse received a much needed refresh with a new layer of wallpaper. Special thanks to Mike Lubinski from the City's Facilities team for completing the plaster repairs and wallpaper hanging!
- The Museum received a grant through a partnership with the National and local Questers organizations to complete repairs to 10 selected items from the Museum's collections.

Update: Archives and Collections

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3. Collect, protect and share the thousands of historical items in the Museum's archives and collections



- Museum Staff created 6 exhibit panels to celebrate the Rochester Hills Fire Department's 50th anniversary.
- The 2025 *Found in Collection* issue generated \$27,700 in donations to the Museum's Collections Fund.
- The Museum began collaborating with the Rochester Hills Public Library to move our digitized material to Luna Imaging software for all to access.
- The Museum loaned items to the Lorenzo Cultural Center for the exhibit "*Leading Ladies of Michigan's Past*" - that featured Dr. Bertha Van Hoosen and Dr. Sarah Van Hoosen Jones.

Share

- Eight archive volunteers assisted with cataloging, digitizing, transcribing and other projects to make the archives more accessible.
- The Museum welcomed Roxanne Parman as the new Museum Archive Intern.
- Archive interns and volunteers completed the cataloging and digitization of The Historic Sites Collection. With the material now accessible on PastPerfect, our research process will become easier and more efficient.
- Museum Archivist Samantha Lawrence presented at the Historical Society of Michigan local History Conference held at Oakland University and served as a virtual panelist for the Michigan Archival Society's Annual Conference. She was a guest speaker on Mayor Bryan Barnett's podcast discussing local women's history and completed a podcast with students at Stoney Creek High School as part of their Social Studies Olympiad.
- Dr. Bertha Van Hoosen and Dr. Sarah Van Hoosen Jones are featured in the new publication *Remarkable Women of Oakland County, Michigan*. Information was provided by the Museum archives.

Update: Community Engagement

4. Promote community engagement by providing Museum resources and facilities that support residents' interests and activities



- Our services, facilities, and cause generated 440 Museum memberships.
- We sustained local nonprofits by hosting monthly meetings of the Rochester Garden Club, Paint Creek Garden Club, four chapters of the Questers, Stoney Creek Model Railroad Club, and the Historical Quilters Guild.
- We were honored to provide our facilities to support 161 private rentals. These include ten weddings, eight receptions, memorial services, professional trainings, Bat Mitzvahs, baby showers, bridal showers, City events, and more. Of those, 124 were free of charge for community organizations.
- Our meticulously kept grounds attracted professional photographers. Over 173 community members chose to preserve their memories by booking a photo session on the Museum grounds.
- Our grounds offered opportunities to financially support community organizations. Our Stone Wall Pumpkin Festival served as a fundraiser for the Rochester Neighborhood House. We hosted prom photos for Rochester High School, and the junior class collected donations.
- We hosted partner programs, such as the Rochester Avon Historical Society's evening lectures and Appraisal Day, as well as the Rochester Historical Commission's Founder's Day event.





Thank You!

As we enter a new year, we look forward to protecting and sharing our buildings and grounds, educating and entertaining through our various programs and events, preserving and sharing our unique archival resources, hosting our community member's events, and enter a new year of collaborations and friendships.

Teacher Testimonial

“Thank you again for hosting us! Your enthusiasm and passion always make our experience rich. I loved the way that you talked about history as “making connections” which is something I have emphasized in my class a lot. I could tell that our students were engaged.”