The TELEGRAPH

VOLUME LII · ISSUE 2 NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2026

Flat Rock Historical Society

25486 Gibraltar Road
Flat Rock, Michigan 48134

734.782.5220 Museum Office
www.FlatRockHistory.org
Archives@FRDigitalHistory.org

MUSEUM CAMPUS HOURS

November
Fridays & Saturdays, 1–4pm
including Thanksgiving weekend

December
Hours to be announced
Open Friday, Dec. 11, 6–8pm
for Jingle Around the Rock

Tours by appointment
Closed to the public in January & February

2026–2027 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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OUR MISSION

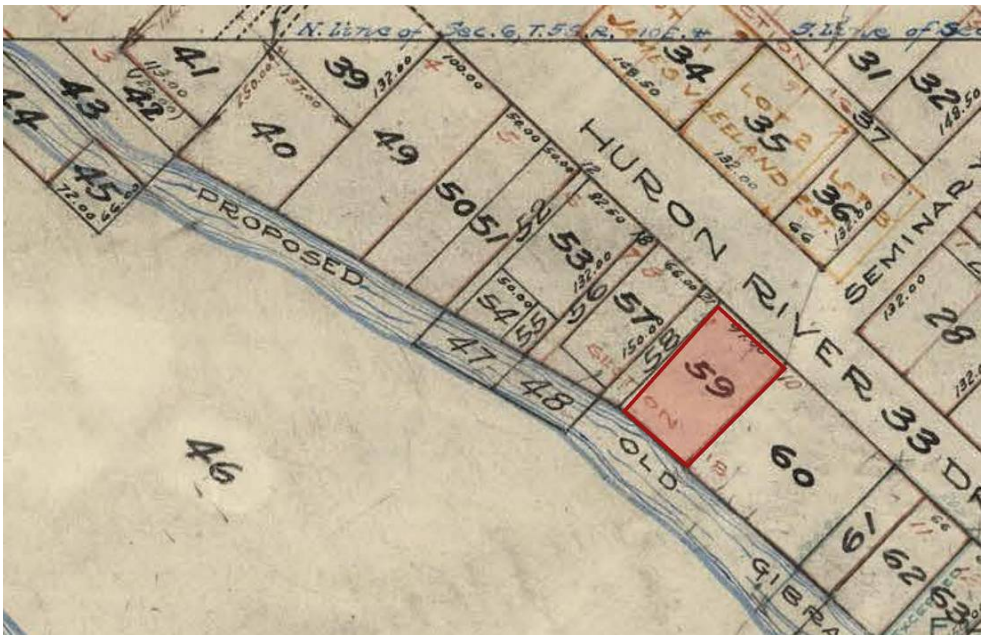
The Flat Rock Historical Society seeks to preserve and communicate to residents and visitors the history and spirit of those who have lived in and near the City of Flat Rock from the beginning of human habitation, or its vision, to bring our community together for the enjoyment, discovery, and learning our past to create our future.

HISTORIC HOUSES OF FLAT ROCK

The Stoflets: A Family Older Than Michigan

From a widow's land patent to a carriage house on the Museum Campus

BY LESLEY GILLILAND HARKAI



Detail from the Private Plat of Fractional Section 6, Brownstown Township. Lot 59, highlighted, became Emogene Stoflet Bunte's village home in 1925, fronting Huron River Drive with the old canal behind it and the Huron River beyond.

In the summer of 1835, Michigan was not yet a state. That July, a widow named **Susannah Stoflet** of Fayette, Seneca County, New York, laid claim to 160 acres of Brownstown Township, the east half of the northeast quarter and the east half of the southeast quarter of Section 33. She was about sixty-six years old. Her federal patent was issued two years later, on April 1, 1837, under President Martin Van Buren.

Susannah's husband, Lodowick, had died in Fayette in 1829. He was born in Pennsylvania in 1768, and like so many others the family had come to western New York's Finger Lakes country in search of farmland. Susannah herself appears to have stayed in New York. But her children and grandchildren came west, and her Michigan land became the anchor for one of the largest extended families in the Lower Huron Valley.

Readers who know our deed books will recognize the names. Susannah's daughter Mary married **Daniel C. Vreeland**, and another daughter, Nancy, married **Elias Vreeland**. Her daughter Elizabeth married into the **Hendricks** family, and Catherine into the **Moses** family. That explains a puzzling 1836 entry in the records of the Gibralter Company's right-of-way, which lists "Daniel C. Vreeland for Susannah Stoflet." He was her son-in-law, handling her affairs on the Michigan side. The Vreelands, Moseses, Hendrickses, Van Cleefs, Langses and Irwins who fill the early records of Brownstown and Flat Rock are, to a remarkable degree, Susannah's descendants.

Continued on page 4

MEMBERS · DECEMBER 2026

Annual Membership Dinner

Friday, December 4 · 5:30pm · Flat Rock Hotel

Join us for the Society's annual Membership Dinner in the historic Flat Rock Hotel on the Museum Campus, catered by **Crystal Gardens**.

The dinner is **free for Historical Society members**, but an **RSVP is required** so we can plan an accurate head count. Members are encouraged to bring an **appetizer or dessert to share**.

RSVP to the museum office: 734.782.5220

Not a member yet, or due to renew? See the reminder at right.

MEMBERS · 2026–2027

Annual Dues Reminder

If you haven't yet, please send in your dues for 2026–2027. Our membership year follows our fiscal year, July 1 to June 30, and your dues keep our doors open and our collection cared for.

Individual $10
Family (same household) $15
Individual Lifetime $100

SCAN TO PAY

Pay online: scan the code, or visit zeffy.com and search for the Flat Rock Historical Society. **By mail:** check payable to the Flat Rock Historical Society, 25486 Gibraltar Road, Flat Rock, MI 48134, or bring it to the museum.



HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

The museum is part of the fun at **Jingle Around the Rock** on **Friday, December 11**. Our doors will be open from **6 to 8pm**, with refreshments, Mrs. Claus and kids' activities inside the museum, and the updated hands-on corner in the Munger Store ready for young visitors. The parade steps off at 6pm, and the tree lighting follows at 7:30pm in Community Park. Come warm up with us!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Help Us Deck the Halls!

Come for an hour or stay the afternoon. Every pair of hands helps.

Monday, November 16 · Noon
Decorating the inside of the buildings

Monday, November 30 · Noon
Decorating the outside of the buildings with fresh greenery and roping

No experience needed, just holiday spirit. Gloves are a good idea for greenery day. Call 734.782.5220 or just show up.

MUSEUM NEWS

Welcome Back, Tim Spezia

Our former curatorial volunteer returns as Assistant Curator



Tim Spezia

The Flat Rock Historical Museum is pleased to welcome Tim Spezia as our new Assistant Curator. Tim first worked with us about ten years ago, and we're delighted to have him back.

Hillary Rose, who has served as Assistant Curator, takes on a new role as ***Educational Program Curator****. Hillary teaches full time, and her fall schedule no longer allowed her to keep the museum open during the week, so we brought on additional help to keep our doors open. Hillary excels at all things educational, and she'll continue to offer the museum's high-quality educational programs as her time allows. We're grateful for all she does.*

MUSEUM HOURS

Open Fridays & Saturdays 1–4pm in November

Including Thanksgiving weekend:
Friday, Nov. 27 & Saturday, Nov. 28
Bring your out-of-town family!
December hours to be announced.
Open **Fri., Dec. 11, 6–8pm** for Jingle Around the Rock.

In Tim's own words:

My name is Tim Spezia, and I'm the new Assistant Curator at the Flat Rock Museum. In that role, I'll maintain the collection database, give tours of the museum, and assist with public programming. I've already started processing a collection of local private letters from the early 1900s, and as I work through it, I hope to share more of their story.

But I'm not entirely new here. About ten years ago, shortly after graduating from Boston University with a B.A. in History, I came on as a curatorial volunteer and worked closely with Curator of Collections Lesley Harkai on a wide range of projects. It was an extraordinary practical education for a young man fresh out of college. Those projects included building a digital catalog for the collection, mounting a large exhibition on the American Presidency during the 2016 election, and experimenting with new kinds of programming. My favorite was a Pokémon Go Day, when we invited the public to explore the museum grounds while hunting Pokémon on the popular app. It brought in visitors who had never been to the museum before.

After Flat Rock, I gravitated toward public libraries and earned a Master's in Library & Information Science from Wayne State University. Those early museum experiences shaped my work at the Trenton Veterans Memorial Library and the Melvindale Public Library, where I taught computer classes for seniors, led a children's book club, and organized displays and exhibitions. My largest project was Melvindale's 2023 Summer Reading Program, *All Together Now*, which featured a Harry Potter–themed escape room, a marble run competition, family storytimes, and an animal show from the John Ball Zoo of Grand Rapids at the Kiwanis Reading Park.

"It was an extraordinary practical education for a young man fresh out of college."

I'm pleased to be back at the Flat Rock Museum. It almost feels like I'm picking up right where I left off. I can't wait to dig into the collection again and find new ways for the people of Flat Rock to engage with their past.

Gratitude

— To **Bruce Chapin** and **Larry Dishaw** for replacing the rotten boards on the boardwalk between the Munger Store and the Hotel.

— To **Cindy Fesko** for taking on the Membership and sending out postcards.

The Stoflets

continued from the cover

"NO CLAIM WHATEVER"

Susannah Stoflet died in Fayette on August 4, 1852, at about 83. Two months earlier she had made her will, signing it with her mark. It is one of the most human documents in our files.

She directed that her Michigan land be divided into five equal shares, "quantity and quality relatively considered," among the families of her children. She left feather beds and bedding to her granddaughters Margaret Langs and Margaret Irwin, and one to her great-granddaughter Lucy Irwin. She asked that her clothing be divided among whichever of her daughters were still living.

And she named her grandson **Lodowick Stoflet** of Michigan as one of her executors. Then she went further. She forgave every debt he owed her and declared that "no claim whatever" should ever be made against him by any of her heirs over anything that had passed between them. Whatever their arrangement had been, she wanted it settled for good.

LODOWICK AND THE FARM

The younger Lodowick, born in New York in 1818, was the son of Susannah's son William, who had come to Wayne County and died in Van Buren Township in 1848. Lodowick married in 1841, and his first child, **Henry L. Stoflet**, was born in New York the next year.

By 1871 Lodowick was a man of substance. That March he paid Austin Fay $9,000 for land near Flat Rock, a very large sum for the time. He farmed it for nearly thirty years. In the deed books he appears as Lodowick, Ludowick and Ludwig, the old German name shifting toward English one record at a time. The family name itself appears as Stoflet, Stoeflet and Stofflet, sometimes within a single generation.

On April 10, 1899, Lodowick and his wife Eliza sold the farm to Edmund Hall for $13,000. Lodowick lived until 1905 and is buried at Oakwood Cemetery in Huron Township.

A WEDDING IN MAY

Three weeks after the farm was sold, on **May 3, 1899**, Lodowick's granddaughter **Emogene Stoflet** married a neighbor, **August L. Bunte**. Readers of our September issue will know the Buntes. With this wedding, two of Flat Rock's founding families became one.

Emogene was born on September 20, 1870, at the home of her parents, Henry L. and Mary Jane Hale Stoflet, near Flat Rock. Henry was active in public life; a campaign flier in the museum's collection shows him running for Wayne County Auditor around 1895. Emogene graduated with the local high school class of 1890.

Her wedding date held a surprise no one planned. As her obituary later noted, May 3 was the very day her mother's parents, Amos A. Hale and Margaret McFall, had married in the Town of Huron in 1842. August Bunte kept their original marriage certificate, written out in ink by the minister, John Gray.

Continued on page 5



Emogene Stoflet (left) with her friend Alice Waltz Keenan, daughter of Joseph Waltz, founder of the village of Waltz.



"Stoflet holding reins," as the original label reads. A photograph from the Stoflet family file.

"No claim whatever" should ever be made against him, Susannah declared of her grandson. She wanted it settled for good.

Emogene and August had four children, and only one son survived infancy. She served for several years as treasurer of the local Methodist Episcopal Church and was active in all its work. After forty-three years on the family homestead, the Buntes moved in the spring of 1913 to a farm just north of Flat Rock. In 1925, as her health failed, they bought a home in the village on Huron River Drive, on a lot backing onto the old canal. Emogene died there on February 14, 1930.

WHAT REMAINS

The Stoflet name carried on in Flat Rock well into the twentieth century. Grover Stoflet advertised his insurance agency on Detroit baseball schedules in the 1930s and '40s. Della and Anna Stoflet each served as Past Matron of the Order of the Eastern Star, Chapter 156.

TWO BUILDINGS THAT STILL STAND

Lodowick's was not the only Stoflet household in town. In June 1876 **Charles Stoflet** paid Adrian and Eliza Van Riper $275 for a vacant lot on Telegraph Road at the village's main crossroads and built a saloon. By 1880 the township assessed him for it, and that year's census listed him as a saloon keeper, with his wife, Ellen, and their children Carrie, Emma, John and Gertie. The Stoflets sold to John Wahl in 1890. By 1921 the building had grown into a hotel, later the Neid Hotel and then the Little Pal. Today, enlarged and painted brick red, it is **Michael's on the River** at 28828 Telegraph Road, still letting rooms by the week nearly 150 years later.

In 1884 Charles also bought a lot on Block 10 along Huron River Drive for $450, and in 1890 he deeded it to Ellen. The family kept it for almost sixty years, until Ellen's children sold it in 1943. The two-story, front-gabled house that stood there in their time is the core of today's **Bobcean Funeral Home** at 26307 E. Huron River Drive, where Arthur and Ethel Bobcean raised their children upstairs and ran the funeral parlor below from 1945. The Stoflets' second lot on that block went in 1930 to Henry J. and Anna Bunte, the family in our September issue.

A third Stoflet building stands on Society ground. The **Stofflet Carriage House**, built in the nineteenth century, was moved by the Flat Rock Historical Society in 1995 to the Museum Campus, where it stands today beside the Flat Rock Hotel, the Langs-Wagar House and the C.G. Munger General Store. A widow from New York claimed this land before Michigan was a state. Today her family's name stands on Society ground.

A family legend holds that the Stoflets descend from Jean-Nicolas Stofflet, a French general of the 1790s. Lodowick Stoflet was born in Pennsylvania in 1768, when the general was still a teenager, so the legend can't be literally true. But it's a good story all the same.



Charles Stoflet's saloon of the 1870s, enlarged into a hotel by 1921, is today Michael's on the River, 28828 Telegraph Road.



The Stoflet family's house on Block 10, held from 1884 to 1943, is the core of today's Bobcean Funeral Home, 26307 E. Huron River Drive.

"Greater Love Hath No Man": Harry Stoflet, 1900–1914

On Sunday afternoon, June 7, 1914, two boys went into the Huron River about two miles west of Flat Rock. **George Newington**, 16, got into trouble within 12 or 15 feet of the bank and called for help. **Harry Edward Stoflet**, son of Frank and Anna Stoflet, went in after him.

Both boys drowned in about 13 feet of water. As the local paper reported, Harry "lost his life in an attempt to save that of the Newington boy." It was hours before their bodies were recovered. Automobiles and hundreds of people lined the banks during the search, and the whole community was shaken.

The newspaper gave Harry's age as 15, but he was born June 23, 1900, just two weeks short of his fourteenth birthday. Someone who cared about him later wrote beside his dates a line from the Gospel of John: *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* Harry rests today at Michigan Memorial Park.

FROM THE COLLECTION

A Courtship in Nearly 400 Letters

A remarkable gift from the Hall and Woodruff families

For more than a century, a nail keg sat in an attic holding one of the most remarkable gifts the museum has ever received.

Inside were nearly 400 letters exchanged between **Frances Hall** and **Seward Woodruff**, descendants of two of Flat Rock's founding families, written between 1897 and 1907. The letters trace a courtship that ended in marriage. The couple settled in Rockwood, in a house Seward built himself, and that house still stands today.



The Rockwood home Seward Woodruff built, still standing today. Imagery © Google

The collection was donated by **Kay Bostater**, a descendant of the Hall and Woodruff families. Despite a century of attic dust, the letters survived in exceptional condition. Each is still in its original envelope, with its original stamp and postmark.

For a century the letters waited in a nail keg, each still in its original envelope, stamp and postmark.

Their pages are full of everyday life in the Lower Huron Valley at the turn of the century. Frances wrote while a student at the State Normal College in Ypsilanti, today's Eastern Michigan University. Seward, an officer in the Masons, wrote of lodge business and local doings. Between them they share town gossip, news of local businesses, and the practical matter of getting from one place to another.

Assistant Curator Tim Spezia is now processing the collection, and readers can look forward to more of Frances and Seward's story in future issues.

Our deepest thanks to Mrs. Bostater for entrusting the museum with her family's history. She plans to donate additional family photographs and information as she is able.

Find Us

Flat Rock Historical Society
25486 Gibraltar Road
Flat Rock, MI 48134
734.782.5220
www.FlatRockHistory.org
Archives@FRDigitalHistory.org
Facebook: FRHS

Give Local History This Christmas

Pictorial History of Flat Rock, the Arcadia book, is $22 at the museum, at Blue Heron Trading Company downtown, or by calling 734.782.5220.

A **gift membership** makes a thoughtful present too. Use the form on page 7, or scan the code to join online.

PLEASE TOUCH! A HANDS-ON CORNER FOR YOUNG VISITORS

Step inside the C.G. Munger General Store and you'll find our newly updated children's section, where touching isn't just allowed, it's encouraged.

Refreshed by Educational Program Curator **Hillary Rose**, the space invites young visitors to explore history with their hands. At its center is a fully furnished dollhouse set at a child's height, where kids can rearrange the furniture and move the family figures however they like.

Nearby, children can dial a rotary phone, tap out a message on an old-style typewriter, and turn the handle of a coffee grinder. A huge jar of old buttons waits to be sorted into a cupcake tin. A postal scale, complete with its set of little weights and a supply of beans, lets young shopkeepers measure and weigh just as clerks once did behind the store counter. There's a big table of Lincoln Logs for building, and a box of dress-up clothes for anyone who wants to try on another era.

Above the hands-on area, the museum's new local history timeline stretches across the wall: sixty panels tracing Flat Rock's story, designed to change as we highlight different periods. While little ones play below, older children and grown-ups can follow the town's history overhead, and maybe find where the rotary phone and the typewriter fit in.

It's the kind of place where a child asks, "What's this?" and a grandparent gets to answer.

Bring the kids during our Friday and Saturday hours, or visit during Jingle Around the Rock on December 11, when Mrs. Claus will be hosting activities in the museum.

NOW SENDING: A WORKING TELEGRAPH

Thanks to volunteer **Dan Whisler**, messages are flying through the Munger Store again. Dan built a working telegraph line that runs from the store's post office section to its barber shop, so visitors can tap out a message at one end and hear it arrive at the other.

Before telephones, the telegraph was the fastest way to send news across town or across the country, and it's the reason this newsletter carries the name *The Telegraph*. Now young visitors can try it for themselves. Our thanks to Dan for his skill and generosity.

✂ CUT ALONG THE DOTTED LINE

Flat Rock Historical Society

Membership Application

Today's date

☐ New member ☐ Renewal

Name

Street address

City / State / ZIP

Email

Telephone

Tell us about your connection to Flat Rock

Our membership year runs July 1 to June 30, with our fiscal year.

CHOOSE ONE

☐ $10 Individual

☐ $15 Family, same household

☐ $100 Individual lifetime

Make checks payable to **FRHS**
Mail with payment to:
Flat Rock Historical Society
25486 Gibraltar Road
Flat Rock, MI 48134

Rather join online?
Scan this code to pay by card.

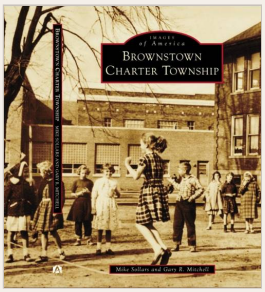
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FLAT ROCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
WORKING IN THE PRESENT
C.G. MUNGER'S GENERAL STORE
TO PRESERVE THE PAST
25486 GIBRALTAR FLAT ROCK, MI 48134

Postage Here

Congratulations, Mike Sollars!



Longtime volunteer and life member **Mike Sollars** has a new book on the way. *Brownstown Charter Township*, written with historian Gary R. Mitchell for Arcadia Publishing's Images of America series, traces Brownstown from farmland to suburb in photographs. It is set to be published in the next month or so. Watch for an announcement of a signing at the museum, where Mike will sell signed copies. Congratulations, Mike!

We'd like to thank Richard & Stephanie Henkel for their continued support and patronage of the Flat Rock Historical Museum. We truly appreciate you!

Christmas 1935

I think about that Christmastime.
In 1935, Depression was the National Scene
- but we were quite alive.

The jobs were few, the money short and still Dad met the test.
God blessed us with used toys and clothes,
We thought we had the best.

I remember well the broken train we pushed around the track.
Electric motor did not work and had a broken stack.

But still a brand new toy would not replace the joy we had,
because we were a family and we had our Mom and Dad.

They taught us just what Christmas is - about our Savior's birth,
Of how the little Babe was born to save our souls on earth.

And so I think of family and of the things they taught;
It all is in the spirit and not how much they bought.

Merry Christmas

© Donald G. Henkel December 1998- 2002