



HISTORIC BRIGHTON

Newsletter and Journal

Exploring our Town's history and educating our community about Brighton's past.

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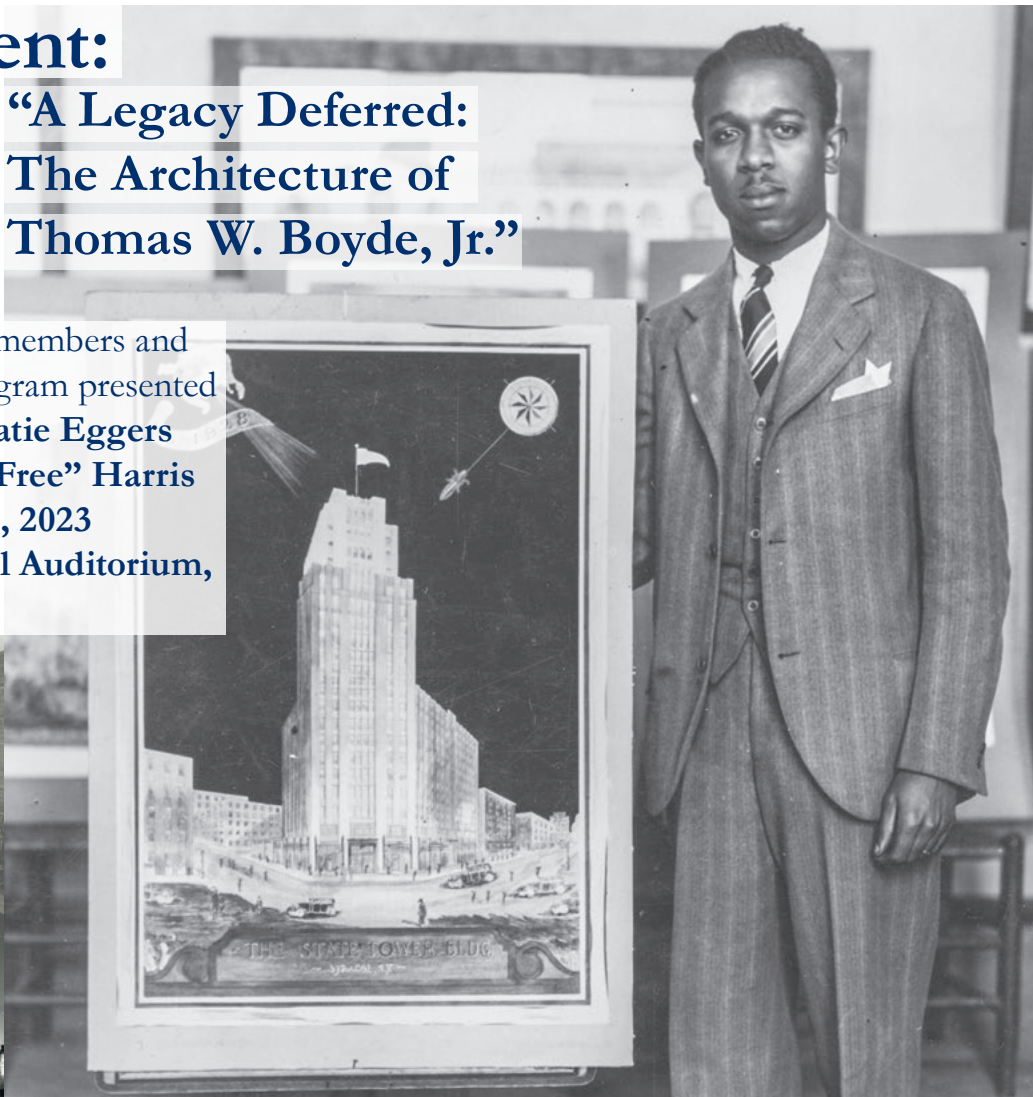
Fall 2023

Historic Brighton Annual Meeting and Fall Event:



“A Legacy Deferred: The Architecture of Thomas W. Boyde, Jr.”

Historic Brighton invites members and friends to a free special program presented by **Christopher Brandt, Katie Eggers Comeau, and Jeffrey A. “Free” Harris** at **2:00 PM** on **October 1st, 2023** at the **Brighton Town Hall Auditorium, 2300 Elmwood Ave**



From the 1930s-1970s, architect Thomas W. Boyde, Jr. (1905-1981) designed over seven hundred projects; approximately three hundred of these were constructed in the Rochester region, and were instrumental in shaping the mid-century city and suburbs. This was accomplished at a time when Boyde, the first African American architect in Rochester, would not have been welcome as a resident of many suburban neighborhoods where his works were realized.

This presentation will explore Boyde's life and prolific career, challenges in documenting the work of African American architects practicing in the mid-twentieth century, and ways to bring new appreciation to the work of this supremely talented architect who left a remarkable legacy in the Town of Brighton, and in the greater Rochester region.

Left, top to bottom: Exterior and interior of Aero Industries Office and Laboratory, Parkway Restaurant, Kennedy Tower; Right: Thomas Boyde at Syracuse University, c. 1928. All images sourced from the Thomas W. Boyde Jr. Collection at the Rochester Museum and Science Center

TRAGEDY ON THE RAILS: A FATAL SUBWAY ACCIDENT IN BRIGHTON

by Matthew Bashore, Historic Brighton Trustee

In major metropolitan areas, subway-related fatalities are unfortunately a rather common occurrence. In 2022, New York City's MTA reported 88 deaths related to the subway system. Even small suburban Brighton once had its own subway fatality.

The fatal accident occurred on 23 September 1940, at the Rowlands Loop. Rowlands Loop was the eastern terminus of the Rochester Subway System that served Rochester's and Brighton's transportation needs from 1927 to 1956. The loop at one time (1928-30) served as a connecting station to the Rochester & Eastern Rapid Railway with service to Pittsford, Canandaigua, and Geneva. The Rowlands Loop site is currently where the interstate 590 exit ramp for Monroe Avenue is located: northeast of Monroe Avenue, behind the Char Broil Family Restaurant. Access to the subway was via a series of sidewalks and stairs off residential Meadow Drive.

In 1938, the Rochester Transit Corporation (RTC) replaced all the subway cars with faster steel cars purchased from the recently defunct Utica & Mohawk Valley Railway. It was one of these electric cars that motorman Michael Keyes was driving in the predawn darkness at 6:15 on that Monday morning. 66-year-old Keyes was an experienced driver, having started in 1901 as a motorman on the Rochester-Sodus Bay interurban until that trolley line was stopped in 1929. Since then, he had worked as a motorman on the subway. That morning there were no paying

passengers, but in the car with Keyes were three other RTC employees: William J. Le Prell of Sylvan Road in Brighton was a subway watchman just starting his day; Cecil Rawlings, 76, of Canandaigua was finishing his overnight shift and heading to Rowlands to pick up his car and drive home. Le Prell and Rawlings were seated in the front of the subway car near Keyes. The third RTC employee aboard, Robert Poole, a conductor, was in the back of the subway car, when he heard motorman Keyes shout, "Hang on!" as the car went into the loop.

The rear wheels jumped the track first, with the rest of the subway car leaving the left side of the tracks immediately afterward. With a tremendous bang that was heard from blocks away, the front of the car plowed into the little Rowlands Loop station, knocking down the

iron uprights that supported the open veranda attached to the shed. The speeding car continued to travel another 70 feet, digging into the trackside cinders, only stopping after "shearing off" two of the tall steel poles that held up the subway's electric wires. The left front of the cab was crumpled, and Michael Keyes was pinned upright against the steel partition behind the motorman's seat. All the windows on the left side of the subway car were broken. Le Prell and Rawlings, who were also in the front of the car, suffered head and chest injuries. Conductor Poole, who was at the back of the car, was uninjured and telephoned for help from the damaged station.

Brighton police officer Larry Hess and two Monroe County Sheriff's deputies arrived on the scene shortly after the call. The injured Le Prell was found sitting on the



Rowland's Loop (1927-1956), with the small station building tangent to the tracks

Primary Sources:

- Rochester Times-Union Sept. 23, 1940
- Rochester Democrat & Chronicle Sept. 24, 1940
- Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum: www.rgvrrm.org

steps of a nearby residence, and the elderly Rawlings was in the station complaining of chest pains. Both were taken by ambulance to Strong Memorial Hospital for treatment. The officers could not extricate Michael Keyes from the cab. They found a heavy-duty jack in the station, and Officer Hess and Deputy Skivington began to jack up the front of the car. During this effort, the pinned Keyes was still conscious and shouting "Hurry!" to the officers. Eventually

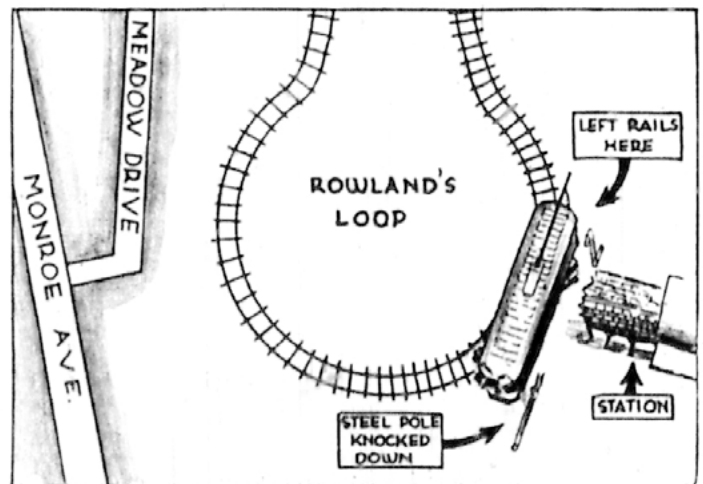
the cab was raised up enough to "bulge" the front and relieve the pressure on the motorman. Keyes slipped unconscious to the floor of the cab. He was pulled out and rushed to Strong Hospital, but sadly, Keyes succumbed to internal injuries shortly after arrival. Traffic was delayed for more than an hour, causing hundreds of Brightonians to be late for work. Initial investigations by RTC officials

blamed speed. Nothing could be found wrong with the tracks besides their being perhaps a little slippery from some early morning fog. Although there were a few other fatalities associated with the Rochester Subway in its almost three decades of existence, Keyes' death is the only one known to have happened within the town of Brighton.

—HB—



Where Subway Car Ran Wild



Original caption:

"This diagram illustrates the scene of destruction when a subway car jumped the tracks at Rowlands Loop today, killing the motorman, smashing two steel poles and battering iron girders of the waiting room."



Left: Photograph shortly after the crash with motorman Keyes trapped in the cab (24 September 1940)

Top Right: A map drawn for the local news demonstrating where the subway car left the rails and the collateral damage once it jumped the tracks

Bottom Right: A subway car rounding a loop, with "ROWLANDS" visible in the marquee

ROCKS OF AGES: RECYCLING HISTORY

By Elizabeth Doty, Historic Brighton President

About ten years ago, I was digging a hole to plant a hydrangea bush in the backyard of my house, when I put a shovel in and hit rock. I dug out several rocks, and found them to be similarly-shaped blocks of reddish-colored stone. Last summer, as I was clearing another area, this happened again and I found several more blocks.

On a walk in my neighborhood near Ellison Park, I discovered an eye-catching pile of these quarried blocks. Some had patches of concrete on their edges. The blocks are arranged in a cairn, which is a mound of stones stacked as a landmark or a memorial. I was told that the blocks were dug out of a nearby gully. I became curious as to why all these blocks were buried and from where they might have come. In conversation with a relative, I was reminded that my grandfather, who lived in the Cobbs Hill neighborhood, had a backyard grill that he had constructed out of stone blocks. He obtained the blocks from street construction workers on Main Street, who were removing them and selling them to passers-by.

This type of paving block is often erroneously called cobblestone, which is less uniform in size, and occurs naturally, being shaped by water. Upstate New York and the southern area of Ontario, Canada, especially close to Lake Ontario, have a number of cobblestone houses.

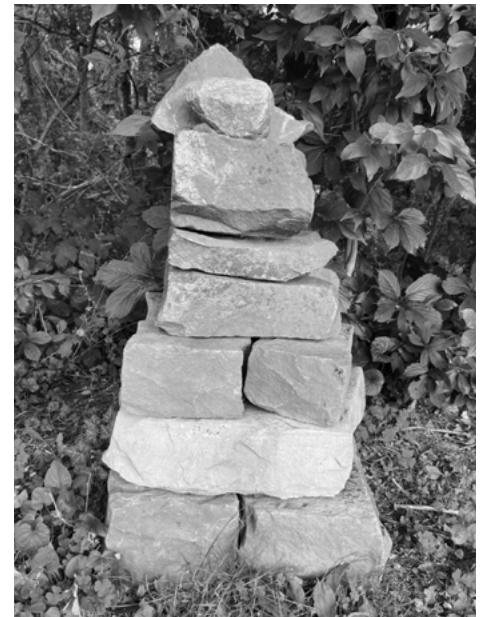
The large brick-shaped blocks that I found are called setts, or Belgian blocks. First used by the Romans, setts can be found paving the streets of Rome, Aberdeen and Edinburgh, as well as many streets in Belgian



Medina Sandstone blocks ('setts') collected from the author's garden, photograph by Phil Matt

towns. Setts were also used to pave Moscow's Red Square. In the United States, setts pave the streets of West Village in New York City, Germantown in Philadelphia, Richmond, Virginia, and the older streets of Portland, Oregon. The setts found in these areas are primarily made of granite.

My buried setts were cut from Medina sandstone, the red or Grimsby variant. In the 19th century, workers digging the Erie Canal in western New York discovered a narrow band of fine-grained quartzose stone about 32 miles long following the path of the Erie Canal between Rochester and Lockport. This stone was near the surface and was easily quarried. In 1837, John Ryan established the first stone quarry business next to the canal in Medina, and advertised "Medina sandstone" for sale. Soon the industry expanded to over 40 quarries and around 2000 stonecutters. Today Medina sandstone can be seen worldwide, including in the steps of the New York State Capital Building



Medina Sandstone cairn sighted near Ellison Park by the author, photograph by Beth Doty

and significant architectural structures in New York City and London. Closer to home, sandstone masonry was used in the construction of Sonnenberg mansion in Canandaigua, the City Halls of Medina and Rochester, the Buffalo Psychiatric Center, and Saint Bernard's Seminary in Rochester.

Stones have been used for paving since ancient times: they prevent ruts,

allow for drainage, and keep horse hooves from slipping, making it easier for carts and wagons to travel. Medina sandstone blocks were first used to pave Rochester streets in the 1850s (see photo at right). But when and why were these Belgian blocks excavated? I may have found the answer.

On 10 April 1941 this headline appeared at the top of page 19 of the Rochester Democrat & Chronicle newspaper: "City Begins Work of Car Track Removal in Main Street." The article details how city workmen had started removing pavement surrounding street car (or trolley) tracks on Main Street and on Monroe Avenue at Clinton Avenue South to prepare for track removal. The article also describes how the city was laying temporary paving over the East Main Street car tracks to eliminate "dust bowl" conditions in the downtown area. The temporary paving was expected to serve until the repaving program got under way.

On the next page there is a photo which shows the removal of blocks similar to those that appear in the first photo of Main Street from 1913-1919 (see page 6).

On Friday, 17 July 1942, two city ordinances were listed on page 21 of the Democrat and Chronicle. The first ordinance authorized a WPA (Works Progress Administration) project for the removal of abandoned trolley tracks on a long list of streets, and restoration of the surface with asphalt concrete or Portland cement.

A second ordinance authorized the city manager to set up an arrangement with the Rochester Transit Corporation, as follows:



Main Street in Rochester c. 1914-1919, Albert R. Stone collection, Rochester Museum and Science Center

- Due to the war and its urgent need of steel and other materials, and the substitution of buses for streetcars, the rails and base track structure of the Rochester Transit Corporation in streets formerly served by trolleys provides a substantial amount of steel and other materials. The WPA will give the city credit on material cost for rails and other valuable materials salvaged from those streets.

- The Rochester Transit Corporation wishes to cooperate with the city and the US Government in order that these steel tracks may be salvaged and turned over to the government to facilitate the production of war material, and is willing to sell to the City of Rochester the rails and base track structure.

- The Rochester Transit Corporation will pay one-half of the cost of resurfacing the portion of the street included within their right of way on streets where rails and base track structures have been removed as a WPA project.

So, just before the U.S. entry into

WWII, the use of trolley cars had diminished enough that the city planners decided to start removing the trolley tracks. After December 1941, through the combination of the demand for steel and the available workforce provided by the WPA, the city devised a situation wherein the government would get the supply it needed for the war effort, and the Rochester Transit Corporation would be compensated for removing a transit structure that had become obsolete. This could be around the time that my grandfather got his pile of setts. He paid about \$4 dollars for a pickup truck load of sandstone blocks. He used fireproof brick to line his grill, because sandstone would explode when heated.

Today, there are several reclaimed-stone businesses around our area. Developers, landscape architects, and stone masons use this now-treasured material to build beautiful patios, walls, driveways, and paths for both homes and businesses. There is also a Medina Sandstone Society, "Dedicated to Historic Preservation

and Community Service”, started in 2004 “to provide pride in the historic heritage of Medina, NY and a springboard for worthy civic projects-building on this heritage.” Their website also includes an incredible database of sandstone structures in New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. (See <https://sandstonesociety.org/>)

So maybe the setts buried in my backyard were collected from a street reconstruction project, possibly during WWII, and then were discarded when they no longer served their purpose, whatever that might have been – perhaps to edge a garden or to define a border between properties. I’m using the blocks I discovered to build cairns marking the final resting places of beloved pets.

People have been recycling building materials for a long time. In 1539, Henry VIII ordered the final dissolution of the monasteries in England. After the religious orders left those buildings, the surrounding populations removed the building stones to use in their own structures. Many historic houses near

Original header: “Noisy? Sure! But worth it to get rid of tracks!”



Original caption: “City workmen tore into the pavement at Main Street East and Circle Street yesterday with pneumatic drills as work got under way on removal of the trolley tracks,” Photo from D&C 10 April 1941 Used with permission from Democrat & Chronicle, - USA Today Network

old archeological sites still contain these fragments. It’s nice to think that our own town preserves the history embodied in humble recycled objects - whether recognized or not.

—HB—

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MERCHANTS OF MONROE - MARIO DANIELE AND FAMILY

By Ray Tierney III

“You are not just a customer, you are my special guest!” became ubiquitous within regional advertising circles for many years. Mario Daniele with his Mario’s Restaurant on East Ave and his Mario’s Via Abruzzi on Monroe Ave built a tremendous following by using and living that simple phrase. But, believe or not, there is so much more to his story.

Mario and his wife Flora emigrated to the United States in 1967, and upon their arrival first settled in Detroit. From there they moved to Rochester, New York, and eventually opened Mario’s on East Avenue across from Wegman’s in 1981. On 22 September 1985, a Democrat & Chronicle “Dining Out” article included the following Mario’s highlights: excellent salad bar, friendly service, and affordable menu offerings. By 1994, Mario decided to build his “dream restaurant and party house” on Monroe Avenue next to Clover Lanes bowling alley. According to a 1938 photo, the site was originally home to a blacksmith, R.C. McMillan Horseshoeing, and a contractor, Fred J. Hines. More recently a service station occupied the street front. Note: An area right behind the site had previously housed the Ivanhoe Motel that moved up Monroe Ave and later became the infamous Travelers Motel.

Mario’s Via Abruzzi opened in 1995 to much fanfare. I vividly remember attending a lavishly catered groundbreaking celebration attended by several hundred well-wishers. The establishment was an immediate hit as the restaurant featured original Italian cuisine and an extraordinary Sunday Brunch. The state of the art building also included meeting space and party rooms capable of serving up to 250 patrons.



Historic photo of buildings housing R.C. Milan Horseboeing and Fred J. Hines Contractor c. 1938



Former Mario’s Via Abruzzi located on Monroe Avenue from 1995 until 2019, when it was demolished along with Clover Lanes and an adjacent restuarant to make way for a new plaza development

Soon it became increasingly apparent that there were challenges confronting the company. Even though the two restaurants were only several miles apart, it became almost impossible for Mario to give adequate attention to both locations. He was the face and soul of Mario’s and he needed to be undivided in his quest to grow the family business. The decision to close the East Avenue location was made easier by the fact that lease renewal negotiations broke down. On 11 December 1996 the D&C reported that as Mario was emptying the building that would become Roncone’s, he wondered out loud,

“I’m even thinking of bringing the original salad bar to Monroe Ave.” He was now able, with help from his sons Anthony and Danny, to devote his full attention to the Monroe Avenue site.

In 2003 Mario was inaugurated Vice Consulate of Italy. This position included such duties as assisting Italians with their visas and passports. More importantly, it also afforded Mario the opportunity to celebrate and support Italian heritage. The position also dovetailed nicely with the community service Mario had become known for throughout the area.

To say that the Daniele family had a “restaurant itch” would be an understatement. Their run of restaurants, from Basil’s with an Italian flair to the Crab Shack that featured seafood, illustrated that they were always eager to experiment, innovate or imitate during the early 2000s. Also during this time they began to be involved in property development and other business endeavors. One of their major acquisitions was the Irondequoit Bay property that long hosted restaurants including the Buccaneer. Mario sought to reinvent the site that also included a marina and adjoining sand dunes. He once shared with me that purchasing the sand dunes was one of the best business decisions that he ever made as hundreds of truckloads of sand helped underwrite the redevelopment of the site. Today that property hosts hundreds of high end apartments including the recently completed Bellagio that replaced the restaurant that was home to Basil’s. Also included is the modern Southport Marina and a restaurant, Brody’s on the Bay. The Daniele Family Companies also own the Westport Marina on Braddocks Bay. Additionally, during this period they obtained, developed and subsequently sold the Royal Car Wash franchise. One location sits on the corner of Clover St and Monroe Ave adjacent to Daniele Family Companies’ headquarters, just one block from where Mario’s restaurant once stood.

Most recently, Mario and his family accomplished what is conceivably one of the most comprehensive redevelopment projects along one of Brighton’s main business corridors. After purchasing Clover Lanes and the adjacent Mamasan’s Restaurant, they decided to close Mario’s Via Abruzzi and completely redevelop the combined properties. The resulting project brought about the first Whole

Foods Market in the Rochester area. The plaza construction together with the Town of Brighton’s review and re-zoning process has led to traffic improvements along what has been one of the most dangerous stretches of roadway in Monroe County. The new traffic lights, and the resulting shared parking that the businesses across the road now have, allows for a safer and smoother traffic flow along Monroe Ave. Also, the new development now abuts an improved Auburn Trail that allows many to walk and bike to do their shopping. As I entered the Whole Foods Market at the recent grand opening, I couldn’t help but notice Mario and Flora smiling from ear to ear as they greeted shoppers. Yes, there were many delays and disappointments during the development process due to numerous unsuccessful lawsuits, but I couldn’t help but get the feeling that Mario was firmly fixated on the future, not on the trials and tribulations of the past.

Interestingly, a friend gave me an artificial intelligence article from Bard that illustrated three options for a brief biography

of Mario Daniele. It appears that writers such as I can rest comfortably for the time being. The three options all have differing dates for milestone events and were not consistent in Mario’s story line. But, I am going to use the following found in option #2: “Daniele is a successful businessman and a dedicated community leader. He is a role model for immigrants and entrepreneurs alike. He’s a passionate advocate for Italian culture and heritage and is committed to helping others.” I would also describe Mario as a visionary, as he successfully added value, function and purpose to his projects. Two in particular stand out as he dramatically changed the south end of Irondequoit Bay and completely transformed Monroe Avenue between Route 590 and Clover Street. He’s also written a book, “Mario’s - 100 Recipes from the Landmark Rochester NY Restaurant” that features his many approaches to classic Italian cuisine.

In conclusion, Mario Daniele and by extension his whole family are worthy additions to the Merchants of Monroe series.

—HB—



Daniele family photo, from left to right: Flora, Anthony, Esilda, and Mario Daniele (reprinted with permission from the Democrat and Chronicle)