HISTORIC BRIGHTON

Newsletter and Journal

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

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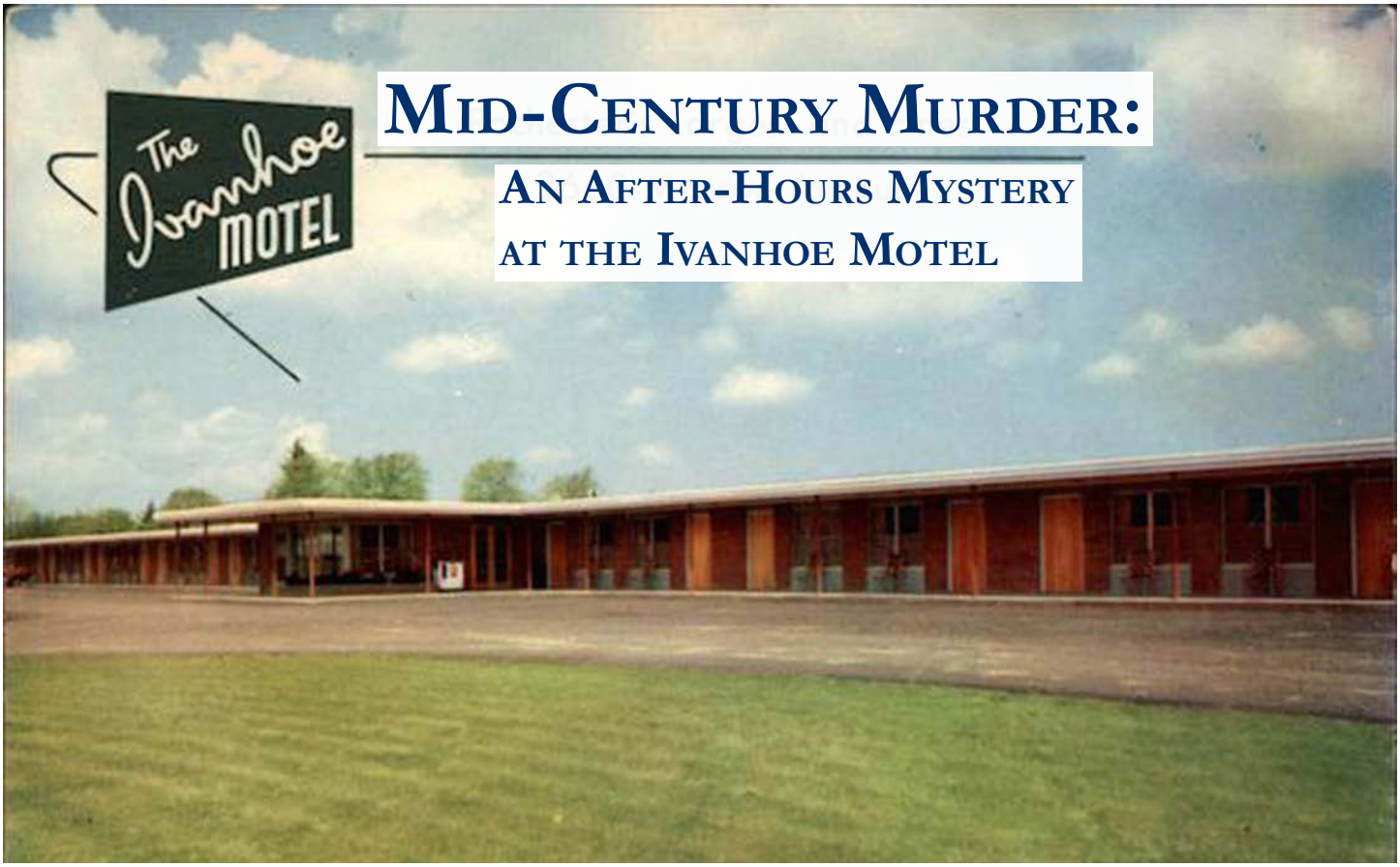
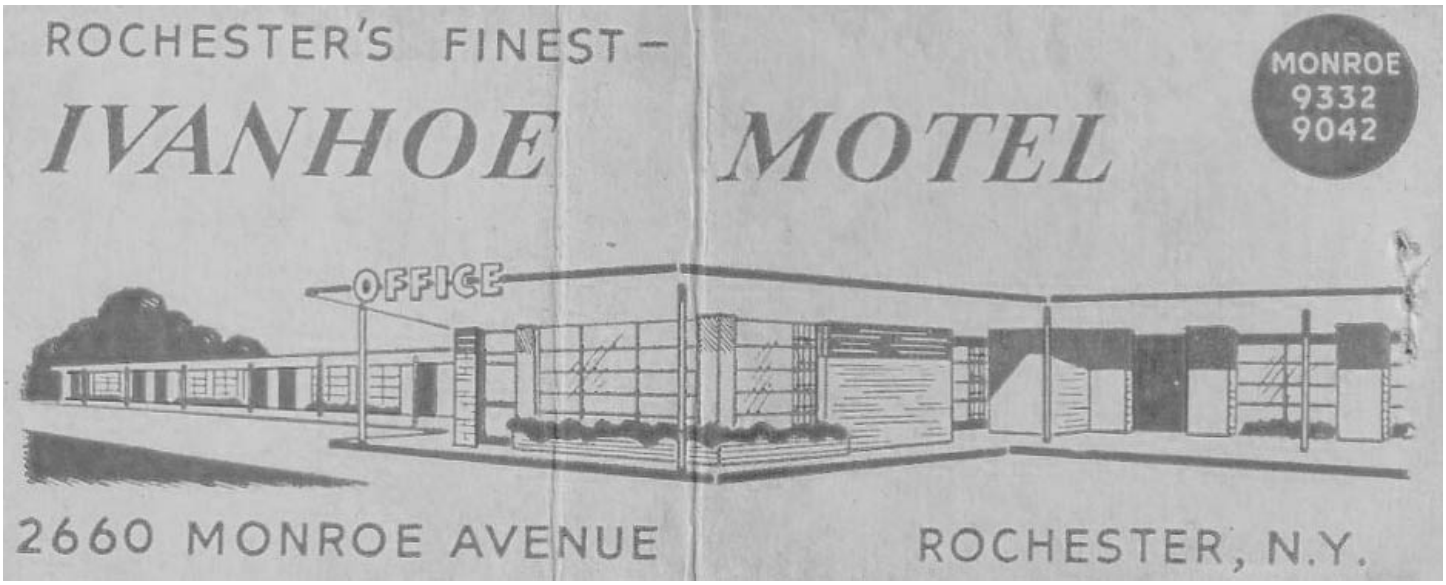
Mid-Century Murder:

An After-Hours Mystery at the Ivanhoe Motel



Ivanhoe Motel postcard



An early advertisement for the Ivanhoe Motel

A Bludgeoning in Brighton: The 1958 Murder at the Ivanhoe Motel

By *Matthew Bashore, Historic Brighton Trustee*

It was just past 11:00 AM on Tuesday, December 23rd, two days before Christmas 1958. At the Ivanhoe Motel on Monroe Avenue, chambermaids Cora Burgesser and Flo DeNardo were making up the rooms of the few guests who had spent the night. As Cora approached room #3, she noticed something odd. On the frozen pavement, under the tire of the green sedan parked in front of the room, was a discarded striped necktie. Even more unusual, despite the cold, the door to the room was ajar about three inches. From inside she heard what sounded like snoring, but odd and more labored. She knocked and called "Housekeeping!" and peeked inside. In the dark room, she saw the outline of a nude man lying on his back with his arms crossed over his chest, covered to his chin by a thin sheet. The strange sounds continued. She thought he might be drunk and went to the office to get the motel manager, William Weist. When Weist entered the room, he made a gruesome discovery: the man was unconscious and there was blood - a lot of blood.

A postcard image of the main office of the Ivanhoe Motel

Mr. Weist telephoned the Brighton Police and reported that one of his guests was ill, hemorrhaging from his head, non-responsive, and that there was a lot of blood on the pillows and sheets where he lay. Sargent Harvey Leroy dispatched an ambulance and officers Wetmore and Parfitt to the scene, but the officers called back shortly asking Sgt. Leroy himself to come to the motel, as it appeared the circumstances were much more complicated. When Sgt. Leroy arrived, the ambulance was still there, and he sent Officer Wetmore to accompany the man to Strong Hospital. He also called the station and requested Police Chief Gordon Snyder come out to the motel. Soon, the Chief and a whole team of investigators arrived at the scene including Brighton Det. Sgt. Carlton Fitch, a photographer and a fingerprint expert from the county, and Albert Skinner (the Monroe County Sheriff).

What they found was evidence that the man had been violently attacked. In the small room containing a single and double bed, the pillows and sheets near the head of the double were soaked with blood. There was also blood and brain matter on the headboard and side table and a single bloody brown leather glove lay on the bed. It was apparent the man had not been alone in the room, as there was an ashtray filled with cigarette butts, some with traces of lipstick. In the bathroom toilet there was urine and paper "... folded neat, like a woman would do..." and a lipstick-stained towel. But there was no obvious weapon, the room had not been ransacked, and though the man's wallet appeared to be missing, in the man's trousers was a money clip with $4 and a handful of change.

The room was registered to a Mr. George Fisher of 108 Millen Dr. in North Syracuse, NY, for one person, for one night. The registration slip had the plate number of the green and ivory Ford Fairlane sedan parked in front of his room, the one with the striped necktie underneath. Weist said Fisher had stayed at the Ivanhoe before and Weist knew Fisher was a traveling salesman for Bausch & Lomb in town for a sales meeting. The car was unlocked with the keys and the car registration in it. The registration and the contents of the room, including several old receipts from the Sleepy Hollow motel across the street, verified George Fisher's identity. The Onondaga County Sheriff's office was called to notify the victim's wife in suburban Syracuse.

At Strong Hospital, Mr. Fisher was diagnosed with multiple compound skull fractures and lacerations on the left frontal lobe. Examining doctors thought he had likely been hit multiple times with an axe or cleaver, possibly a hammer. He remained unconscious with only some uncontrolled movement of his left arm. Brighton Police Officers remained with Fisher, hoping for some kind of statement when he regained consciousness. Doctors cautioned that this was unlikely as the "front lobes of the brain were destroyed." If he survived, it was doubtful he would ever speak again.

Monroe County Sheriff's officers tracked down a Helen Stein of

Rochester, whose phone number was listed in a small address book found with Fisher's possessions. Stein said Mr. Fisher had called her about 6:00 p.m. on the 22nd, and met her when she got off work at 9:00 p.m. He was with her, at her apartment from 9:30 p.m. to 12:15 a.m., when he left. She said she did not accompany him back to the motel, and that theirs was a "friendly acquaintance only." Police took lipstick samples from Miss Stein for comparison; however, they did not match the stains in the motel room.

That evening, George Fisher's wife Pearl arrived from Syracuse. At the hospital, police asked about her husband's missing wallet. Pearl said he seldom carried more than $40-$50 or a couple checks, but she enquired about a diamond ring George always wore. It was yellow gold with a diamond about ¾ carat, valued about $500. Considering that the cost of a night's stay in the Ivanhoe was $6, this was a sizable sum in 1958. Police hadn't found a ring on George Fisher, or in the room. They now had a probable motive for the attack.

The news of the Brighton attack was in the papers, and on the radio and television. The following morning (December 24th), Sheriff Skinner got a call from a fellow policeman who reported that a friend of his, Angelo Cypressi had contacted him because his 21-year-old son Sam made known that he and three other young men had been out to the Ivanhoe Motel in the early hours of the 23rd. Sam Cypressi said he and two friends were sitting in a cab driven by Robert Silveri near the Hamilton Cab headquarters at the corner of Franklin & Main. A woman they knew, JoAnn Young, hailed them from a green Ford sedan and asked them to follow her out to the Ivanhoe Motel. JoAnn said she had been with a man at the motel, that he had passed out, and she needed to return his car. Silveri said on the way to the Ivanhoe, they had dropped off a fifth man, a drunken party reveler, at his mother's house on Rosewood Terrace. The drunk's name was Sam Campanella.

Soon, all the men in the cab that night were brought to the Monroe County Jail and interviewed by Sheriff Skinner and Monroe County District Attorney, Harry Rosenthal. They corroborated Cypressi's story, and said after getting to the motel, JoAnn Young got in the cab with them and drove back to the city. At her request they dropped her at the Normandie on Alexander Street.

A once elegant residential hotel, by the late 1950's the Normandie Apartments were a run-down behemoth of cheap rentals. Registered as Mrs. Sobb, Miss Young lived there with her 20-year-old boyfriend Joseph Sobb Jr., a part-time bartender. Sobb Jr. was the son of Joseph Sobb Sr. who was a shifty figure well known by the Rochester police. When police went to the Normandie to question JoAnn, Joe Jr. told them Young had left town to visit her mother. They brought Sobb to the county jail for questioning. Sobb Jr. said he had given JoAnn $75 and put her on a train to Detroit at one in the morning on the 24th. Joe said she had called him in the early hours of Christmas Day to say she had arrived at her parents' home in Pontiac, Michigan. Further, he said JoAnn had told him she was at the Ivanhoe with Fisher on the night of the 22nd. A search of Joe and JoAnn's apartment at the Normandie found no ring, no glove, no weapon, nothing more suspicious than a pair of brass knuckles. Joe Sobb was held at the jail as a material witness.

On Christmas Day, readers of the

Portrain of victim George Fisher

Rochester Democrat & Chronicle awoke to the headline "MYSTERY CARS, MEN ENTER BEATING CASE" accompanied by a photo of victim George Fisher.

Ivanhoe Motel chambermaid Florence DeNardo reported she had seen two late model cars, one a salmon and ivory station wagon with two men, quickly leave the motel parking lot, about two hours before the body was found. She said neither car belonged to motel guests. The article, typical of the salacious press of the time, recapped Fisher's "brutal beating," and that he was "found nude and unconscious." It said police were trying to trace Fisher's movements after he left an Elm St. bar after a single beer between 12:15 and 12:30 A.M.

Fisher's movements soon came to light. He had checked in at the Ivanhoe Motel around 2 p.m. on the 22nd, then after an afternoon business meeting on Gibbs Street had dinner at Lorenzo's Restaurant. He returned for another meeting on Gibbs and then drove back to the motel in Brighton. Robert Weist, the motel owner's son, said he got a

call from Mr. Fisher at about 8 p.m. to complain his TV wasn't focusing properly, which Robert tried to fix. Shortly after that, George Fisher was spotted at the bar of the nearby Clover Lanes bowling alley. Fisher then went into the city again and met up with Helen Stein on Chestnut Street. Shortly after midnight he was spotted drinking a quick beer at the Turf Bar, and entered the Bamboo Club around 12:30 am, where he met a large blonde woman and left with her an hour or so later.

The Bamboo Club, at 175 East Ave, was a notorious nightspot owned by Hyman Issacs and his wife Susan, a former burlesque performer. With three shows nightly, it showcased Joe Noto's and Lou Fellen's jazz bands and a string of strippers and exotic dancers, including the redhead Hope Starr and the "Miss Florida Pin-up Girl," Bonita Secret. In 1956, the Democrat & Chronicle reported that police had been summoned to the club when the clothes of an entertainer "...were stolen from her dressing room, along with two cases of scotch."

JoAnn Young, whose real name was Eleanor JoAnn Wilson, was only 21 and a regular at the Bamboo Club. She was 5'8" and 170 lbs., and was therefore considered a large woman that newspapers referred to as a "buxom blonde." She styled herself a "nightclub singer" from Montreal, Canada, and she did occasionally sing a song or two in the dive bars in downtown Rochester including the Bamboo Club. Less glamorously, the former Mrs. Young was a divorced mother of three from suburban Detroit who made most of her money as a sex worker.

JoAnn had been in trouble with police back in October when she "rolled" a client of hers. The victim, a married man, had his $300 returned but hadn't wished to press charges.

JoAnn's pimp was the notorious Boris "Tiny" Briskin. Tiny was a 330-pound taxi driver for Central Cab Company. Called "The King of the Pimps," Boris lived with his mother, who "babied him, treating him like a 5-year-old". Briskin enjoyed betting on horses and hung out at some of the seedier bars in town including the Bamboo Club.

A friend of Tiny Briskin said he "needs help mentally," and though he could be cordial in one-on-one interactions, in groups he was loud and cruel, often going into violent rages. Described by newspapers as a 5x5, referring to his physical dimensions, Tiny didn't carry a weapon, but because of his size, he didn't need to. It was said the police were afraid of him.

Briskin liked to tell people he was the nephew of Rochester District Attorney Harry Rosenthal. He was not. However, Tiny was a cousin to the recently imprisoned mob boss Constenze Valenti, and a known associate of Sam Campanella. Campanella was a former cabbie, now a driver for Groves & Son's Construction in Brighton, a Teamsters Union steward, and ran a gaming room behind a storefront at East & Scio. Not surprisingly, "Sam Camps" Campenella was also familiar to Rochester's Mafia. Sam was also the drunken partygoer that cab driver Robert Silveri had dropped at his mother's home on the way to the Ivanhoe.

From the reports of the young men who drove JoAnn back to the motel on the 23rd, JoAnn could be charged with grand larceny for "borrowing" Fisher's car to return to the city. A warrant was issued, and the Sheriff's office contacted the Detroit police. Under the headline "MICHIGAN COPS NAB WOMAN SUSPECT IN MOTEL BLUDGEONING," the December 26th D&C described a Christmas Day raid on JoAnn's parents' home in Pontiac, 30 miles north of Detroit.

After being told earlier that she wasn't at home, Detroit police smashed into the Wilson home and found the "husky blonde" hiding in a bedroom. She was arrested as the prime suspect on a fugitive warrant charging her with grand larceny. Held in a Detroit City Jail, JoAnn waived extradition. Coincidentally, Monroe Co. Sheriff's Asst. Chief Donald Mitchell was visiting relatives in Detroit for the holiday and offered to fly her back to Rochester.

In Rochester, JoAnn confirmed to authorities that she had been with Fisher at the Ivanhoe. Hers was the lipstick on the towel and cigarettes. At the Bamboo Club, JoAnn had asked Fisher for $50 for her services, but upon arriving at the motel Fisher said he had only $35 in his wallet and offered to write a check. She said she would rather have the cash. After intercourse, he mumbled, "See you in the morning, baby" and passed out. Unable to sleep in the cold motel room, JoAnn took the cash and his car keys from his trousers. Leaving the door to the motel room unlocked, she drove his car into the city, where she hailed the cab with the "boys" in it and returned to the motel. She told police that Fisher was uninjured when they returned. However, contradictorily the cab driver Robert Silveri said when they pulled into the motel parking lot JoAnn left the keys

in Fisher's car, hopped into the cab, and never reentered Fisher's room. JoAnn said she fled to Michigan when she heard about Fisher's death on the radio. Based on her admission that she was with Fisher on the night of the attack, Miss Wilson was taken before Justice McNall of Brighton and charged with first degree assault and robbery to be held for grand jury action.

In the weeks since his attack, police investigations revealed that George Fisher was not an innocent victim of a onetime indiscretion. When in town, Fisher frequented many of Rochester's seedier bars and had been in the Bamboo many times before. A bartender at the Night Cap lounge reported that just the previous week George had been there "in search for a mate," and buying drinks for a woman called Leta Foote. Though he was married to Pearl for nearly 25 years, his little black book contained the names of a dozen women in various towns throughout upstate New York and Western Pennsylvania. When interviewed, many of these women said they knew him as Bob Young, or just "Red" with lies about him being divorced and studying to be a doctor. Fisher also fit the description of a man wanted by authorities in New York, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut for passing bad checks signed "G.F. Fisher."

Rochester cab drivers were often linked with the sex industry. It was natural for a visitor to the city to ask the cabby where to meet a woman for a "good time." Many got a commission for a recommendation, and several, like Briskin, were pimps. On New Year's Day, police were holding Briskin and Robert Silveri, the cab driver who followed JoAnn to the Ivanhoe, on vagrancy charges. Briskin said he was at the Bamboo when JoAnn left with Fisher and then was with her from 3 to 7 a.m. at the Celebrity Lunch on North Clinton. The diner staff said JoAnn was briefly there getting coffee and playing the jukebox at 4:30 that morning, she was alone and driving a late model Ford sedan. Briskin was not with her. The tire iron in the back of Briskin's cab was checked for bloodstains. There was no blood, and Silveri and Briskin were soon released, but lost their taxi licenses as a result of the inquiries.

At 7:10 a.m., on Tuesday, January 13th, 1959, George Fisher finally succumbed to his injuries and was pronounced dead at Strong Hospital. The coroner said the brain injuries were the worst he had ever seen. He ruled the death a homicide.

With Mr. Fisher's death, and now facing a murder charge, JoAnn began to talk. At her parents urging, she told the D.A. that after the cab brought her back to their apartment, she told her boyfriend Joe Sobb about the night's events and about Fisher's diamond ring. According to JoAnn, Joe said, "Let's go get it!" They then drove Joe's car back out to the motel in Brighton, first stopping at a gas station on University where Joe picked up a metal pipe. When they got to Ivanhoe, JoAnn stayed in the car while Joe went into Fisher's room. JoAnn soon grew worried and followed Joe. She told police she saw Fisher's bloodied head and Joe struggling to get the ring off Fisher's hand. He removed his glove and finally pulled off the ring. Joe wrapped the pipe in a newspaper and threw it in the back seat of his car.

JoAnn Wilson being led into the courthouse by Deputy Edna Hawken, follwing Monroe County Sheriff's Office Detective Domenic Miglioratti

JoAnn Wilson in the papers upon returning to Rochester, NY from Michigan

Back at their apartment, JoAnn helped Joe clean the blood off his coat, which he later took to a dry cleaner.

On January 23rd, JoAnn Wilson and Joseph Sobb Jr. were indicted by a Grand Jury for first degree murder. JoAnn, under her court-appointed lawyer, agreed to turn state's evidence against Sobb at his trial and plead guilty to a lesser charge of manslaughter.

Town of Brighton and Rochester police, the county sheriff's office, and D.A. Rosenthal's office with the help of the state police worked hard to build a case against Sobb. According to an informant, Joe Sobb Jr. and Sr. used the P.M. Jewelry Store on Main, next to Eddie's Chop House, to fence stolen property. The owner said Joe Sobb Jr. and Sr., were old friends, and did a lot of business there, but denied ever seeing the diamond ring.

Police also tried desperately to link the bloody glove to Sobb, contacting the manufacturer in Gloversville, checking their sales to local department stores, and interviewing salesclerks. The clerks at the B. Forman store knew Joseph Sobb Jr. and his father by reputation (not good), and though the gloves the store sold were the same type and manufacture, the labels were slightly different. And as the Sobbs always paid cash, there was no sales record.

Police contacted all the local dry cleaners, searching for the tan fur-lined coat JoAnn said he wore the night of the beating. None of the cleaners could recall the coat or Sobb. However, it was soon learned that in early January, Joe Sobb had returned a similar coat to Sibley's department store and exchanged it for a suede jacket. The returned coat was located and given to the Sheriff's department. Sobb's coat was sent to the FBI lab in Washington, but no traces of blood were found.

With great effort, police contacted all the guests staying at the Ivanhoe the night of Fisher's assault, but none saw anything suspicious. Robert Tousano, the night attendant at Sophia's Mobil Service Station on University, reported that on the night of Fisher's beating Joe Sobb stopped by and picked up a 18" pipe ostensibly to jack up a car. But he couldn't remember what time, other than between 1 a.m. and daybreak, and he didn't see if JoAnn was with Sobb. Sophia, the station's owner, said they kept a clean shop and never kept old pipes about.

Police had no ring, no definitive link with the glove, no bloodstained clothes, no weapon, and no witnesses besides the fuzzy recollections of the gas station attendant. If, as JoAnn said, Sobb had bludgeoned Fisher and stolen the ring, Sobb had done a good job of covering his tracks.

On May 15, 1959, Joseph Sobb Jr., age 20, appeared in Monroe County Court before Judge Clarence Henry and a jury of twelve men on a charge of first-degree murder. Joe's father had hired Sidney Z. Davidson, a very successful trial attorney, and a close friend of Sheriff Skinner, to defend his son. Davidson began a lengthy character assassination of JoAnn Wilson, intimating if not directly accusing her of the attack on Fisher. He tried to convince the all-male jury that she was bereft of morals and "hated men." Davidson brought up that she was not really divorced and besides her two daughters in Michigan, she had another daughter with a "colored man" in Cleveland. He mentioned JoAnn being arrested in October for stealing $300 from a client. Davidson suggested she would have been upset with George Fisher, asking originally for $100, negotiating for $50, and only receiving $35 for

her services in that cold motel room. Sam Campanella testified that JoAnn once told him she was so hard up for money she "could crack somebody's head." Davidson even implied George Fisher's wounds might have been caused by a lady's high-heeled shoe, however the coroner disagreed.

D.A. Harry Rosenthal relied mainly on the testimony of JoAnn Wilson. They had the testimony of the gas station attendant who said Sobb Jr. had stopped by for a pipe. But on cross-examination, Davidson pointed out that when originally questioned by police, the gas station attendant reported that Sobb Jr. didn't take anything away from the station. Only after he heard JoAnn's story did he remember the pipe.

The jury felt there were inconsistencies in JoAnn's story. The men in the cab said it was nearly sunrise when they drove her back to the Ivanhoe, but JoAnn said it was dark when the bludgeoning took place. After creating a chronology of the evening's events, the jurors concluded Joe Sobb Jr. and JoAnn couldn't have gotten to the motel until after sunrise when the chance of being seen was greater. JoAnn had initially lied to police and changed her story repeatedly. Given the defense's portrait of her as an amoral opportunist, they did not trust her veracity. Besides JoAnns' story, there was no hard evidence placing Joe Sobb Jr. at the Ivanhoe that night. Sobb Jr. said he was never there - he ultimately acquitted and released.

JoAnn Wilson's sentencing on June 11th was a dramatic scene. Miss Wilson entered the courtroom in a blue maternity dress and smiled at her parents who had come from Pontiac. She was expecting her fourth child in the fall. At her arraignment, JoAnn had been allowed to plead guilty to manslaughter and testify against Sobb Jr. at his murder trial. JoAnn's attorney, John Skivington, requested her sentence be suspended due to her testimony against Sobb Jr. and because he believed her story that she was not directly involved in Fisher's death. County Judge Clarence Henry seemed to have believed JoAnn's testimony against Sobb Jr. as well, though he cautioned that her testimony against Sobb Jr. "...would be worthy of recognition only if it was true." However, William Duell, the foreman of the jury which had acquitted Sobb Jr., spoke up and said, "...it was obvious we (the jury) didn't..." believe Miss Wilson's story.

Whether he believed her innocent of Fisher's death, Judge Henry condemned JoAnn's lifestyle, saying, "...it is only too apparent that in your relatively short life you have followed a path of immoral conduct which has been not only amazingly degraded but menacing conduct which too often presents, as it has here, possibilities leading to most grievous results..." and she had "...initiated the felonious enterprise of taking another's property, which led to a violent death." The maximum sentence was 10 to 20 years. Judge Henry gave her 7½ to 15 years at the Westfield State Farm Prison at Bedford Hills. With good behavior and time served, she would be eligible for parole in 4½ years.

Little is known of JoAnn Wilson after her sentencing. Social Security records indicate she died in January 2004 and had been recorded under a variety of first (Joann, Eleanor) and last (Wilson, Young, Morris) names. Who bludgeoned George Fisher is still a mystery. Was JoAnn lying? Was Joe Sobb Jr. innocent as the jury believed? During the investigation, several of the people who knew JoAnn and Joe told police they believed them incapable of the bludgeoning, but thought one or more of the cabbies had done it. Did one of the taxi drivers, or the other men in Fisher's car return to the motel, and were these the "mystery cars" that chambermaid Flo DiNardo reported seeing speeding out of the parking lot a couple hours before the crime was discovered? Was the mobster Sam Campanella or JoAnn's pimp, the notorious Boris "Tiny" Briskin involved?

The Brighton Police file on the case contains two documents that post-date the trial. The first is a note to Chief Snyder and the Brighton police from District Attorney Harry Rosenthal thanking them for their very excellent and conscientious cooperation with the Sobb investigation. The second, is a clipping from the April 5, 1961, D&C. The article describes the violent death of "Tiny" Briskin who was stabbed in the heart with a boning knife by his fiancé in her Dewey Avenue home. He had been arguing with her all day, picking her up and threatening to shove her head through the ceiling, eventually cornering her into the kitchen. A bleeding Briskin staggered out of the home and died on the sidewalk. His fiancé claimed self-defense and was easily cleared by a grand jury.

HB

Sources for this story include the following publications: Rochester's Democrat & Chronicle, and We: The Newsmagazine, the Syracuse Post-Standard and the Brighton Police file on the Fisher case. Thanks to Brighton Police Chief, David Catholdi for locating it, and providing access.

The Ivanhoe Motel in Brighton

By *Matthew Bashore, Historic Brighton Trustee*

The Ivanhoe Motel opened in 1953 at 2660 Monroe Ave with 24 units and a small coffee shop. The following year, another 23 units were added. The motel stood on the northeast side of busy State Route 31, approximately where an Arby's restaurant currently stands. Eventually expanded to 61 units, contemporary advertisements claimed it to be the largest motel in the northeastern U.S.

In 1963, New York State purchased the Ivanhoe property and the Sleepy Hollow Motel across the street and demolished the buildings to make way for entrance and exit ramps to the new Outer Loop Expressway (I-590). Newspapers reported the state paid $600,000 for the property.

The same year, using the proceeds from the sale, a new 61-unit motel was constructed at 2100 Monroe Ave., at the corner of Torrington Dr. The new two-story Ivanhoe Motor Lodge had a beauty and barber shop and a full-service restaurant. In 1973, the Ivanhoe Coffee Shop became the Taj Mahal restaurant, the first dining establishment in the Rochester area serving Indian cuisine.

Mary & Heinz Ehmer, who owned the Dreamland Motel in Webster, took over the motor lodge in the early 1970s, and in 1974 changed the name to the Travelers Motel.

The Travelers soon became the site of controversy as a residence for unhoused state welfare recipients and for ever-increasing criminal activity including prostitution, narcotics, and violence.

To the neighbors' delight, the motel was demolished in late 1996. The site of the Travelers Motel is now a CVS pharmacy.

HB

Interior photo of the Ivanhoe Motel dining area

Photograph of the Ivanhoe Motel (at the second location), circa 1964

Interior photo of a guest room at the Ivanhoe Motel

Ivanhoe Motel matchbook

Merchants of Monroe: Irving Mann

By *Ray Tierney III, Historic Brighton Member*

With the recent celebration of Veterans Day just over a month ago, this story was chosen to highlight a prominent local veteran and later significant Merchant of Monroe. Irving Mann was a decorated veteran of WWII, and later the founder of Mann's Jewelers, which has called Brighton its home since 1968. He passed in 2015 just shy of his 90th birthday and was remembered for his deep roots within the the jewelry business. But, there is much more to his story.

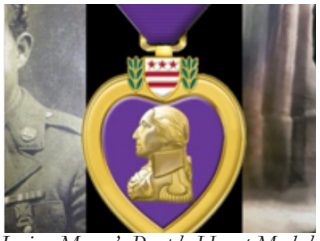
According to JCK (Jewelers Circular Keystone), a national jewelers trade organization, his storied career in the Jewelry business beginning as a master watchman was preceded by a European tour in the U.S. Army. 19-year-old Mann found himself across the Atlantic Ocean participating in the D-Day invasion of Normandy under General George Patton. Mann was subsequently awarded a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star for his service. The French Legion of Honor also recognized him with a citation. His wartime chapter wouldn't be closed until the return of his dog tags - which he had lost in France - nearly 70 years later in 2013.

The known history of the Mann family dates back to 1836 in Russia where they were skilled silver craftsmen. In 1922, Louis Mann emigrated and opened a store in Buffalo. After the war in 1947, Louis' grandson, Irving, opened Mann's Jewelers at 158 Clinton Ave in Rochester. In 1968, due to urban renewal, Irving and his wife Gertrude moved the business to Brighton where it still resides today in the plaza adjacent to Monroe's (which previously housed the Spring House, see Historic Brighton Volume 25 Number 1).

Mann's has been expanded several times and now finds siblings Robert and Nancy carrying on the long running family business. The jewelry business is an especially competitive trade that demands intense concentration and distinct and respectable branding. Mann's has carefully crafted their identity, explained by Rob Mann with a simple phrase: "This business is built on service." Nancy was instrumental in keeping the business forward looking when she envisioned the need for "branding" many years ago. She focused on pieces from the likes of: David Yurman, Mikimoto, Alex Sepkus and Steven Webster. Just as important was the promotion of custom pieces crafted by Mann's staff artisans. This team effort led by Irving has clearly established Mann's as one of Rochester's finest jewelers.

Oh, in case you're wondering, the last sighting of the Yellow Cab made famous in the Mann's television advertising was in the now closed Eastview Mall store. But, you never know as it may be in route from Manhattan with a customer looking for the "best jewelry store in New York State." Irving Mann is a fitting addition to this series of the "Merchants of Monroe" as he and many like him of the "greatest generation" came home after the war to a life of family, entrepreneurial and community contributions. Finally, thank you to all the men and women who have served this great country of ours!

HB



Irving Mann's Purple Heart Medal

Irving Mann with customers at Mann's Jewelers in the late 1970s, from the D&C Archives

Irving Mann in a 1994 WXXI Interview

History Today: BHS Women's History Club Walking Tour

By *Sara Zinkin, Historic Brighton Student Trustee*

On Saturday, 1 November 2025, members of the Brighton Women's History Club at Brighton High School joined Historic Brighton founder and local researcher Arlene Vanderlinde for a detailed walking tour of Edgewood Avenue.

Planned by Mrs. Vanderlinde with support from Sara Zinkin (the club's president and Historic Brighton student trustee), the tour offered students the chance to study Edgewood's history directly, rather than through photographs or archives.

Mrs. Vanderlinde began by describing what Edgewood Avenue looked like in its earliest years, when most of the land surrounding it was still open and used for farming. The stop at Evans Farm became one of the most meaningful points along the route. Students learned that the property once formed part of a much broader agricultural landscape - an important reminder of how rural Brighton was before the spread of residential development. Mrs. Vanderlinde spoke about the Evans family and the way the land shifted in purpose as the town's population grew.

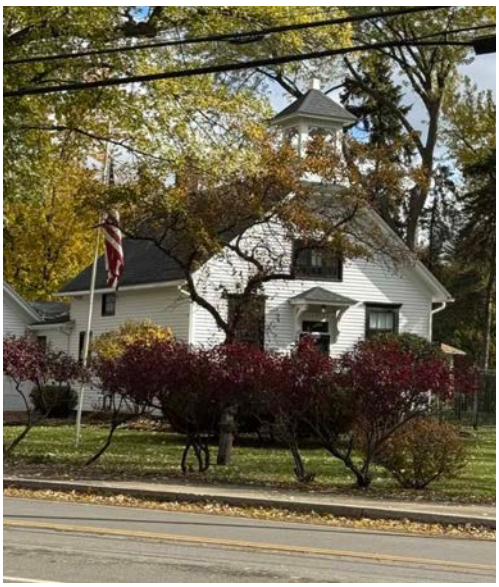
As the group continued down the street, students paused at homes representing different eras of construction. Some featured early twentieth-century design elements, while others reflected architectural trends that came decades later. Mrs. Vanderlinde drew attention to details people often overlook: the way stone foundations were set, the types of porch columns, as well as the shaping of windows. These features, she explained, reveal not only craftsmanship but also the changing priorities and aesthetics of past residents. She also shared brief histories of several families who lived along Edgewood Avenue and how their lives intersected with the growth of the surrounding community.

Throughout the walk, Mrs. Vanderlinde connected specific houses and landmarks to larger themes in Brighton's history: transportation routes that influenced settlement, the gradual division of farmland into smaller residential lots, and the slow but steady shift from rural to suburban identity. Seeing these patterns in the physical landscape gave students a clearer understanding of how Brighton developed over time.

Students described the tour as energizing and engaging. Many said it changed the way they see neighborhoods they pass through almost every day. The experience aligned closely with the goals of the Women's History Club, which encourages students to connect with local history, recognize the contributions of women within those narratives, and develop a deeper appreciation for the community's past.

The Edgewood Avenue tour served as a reminder that much of Brighton's history is still visible - embedded not only in documents and collections but also in the streets, houses, and familiar places that define the town today.

HB



Images from various spots along the walking tour, photos by Sara Zinkin

David Whitaker - In Memoriam

Obituary by Anthony Chapel, Edited by Michael Lempert, Historic Brighton Trustee

We are sad to announce the passing of Historic Brighton Trustee, David Whitaker.

David passed away peacefully on 4 September 2025 following a long and courageous battle. He served as a member on the board of Historic Brighton beginning in January of 2009, with roles as the Vice President (2012-2013) and President (2014-2016) of the organization.

David was born in Rochester NY, and survived by his wife of 58 years, Stephanie (Strakosh); sons, Kevin (Suzanne), Alex (Eileen); grandchildren, Emily, Jack, Sydney, Katie, Regan, Finn; his sister in law, Kathleen (Jim) Poole, and many nieces and nephews. Predeceased by his parents, Gaylord (Gee) and Betty; stepmother, Janet; brother, Gay; and sister, Margery.

David attended Allendale and was the recipient of Union College distinguished alumnae award. He had a successful career in finance, starting with Security Trust, Essex Investment Group, McDonald Investments/Key Bank retiring as Senior Compliance Officer.

He had a lifelong love of his community, giving back and serving others. Some of his volunteer commitments included Medical Motor Service, and Landmark Society of Western NY, where he was the interim director, Historic Brighton, Brighton Preservation Commission, Chair of Friendly Senior Living, Board of Trustees Chair Al Sigl Center, RIT Dean's Advisory Board, to name a few. He was a member of the Genesee Valley Club and the Club's historian. David spent 80 years on Seneca Point, Canandaigua Lake where he enjoyed boating, swimming, and tennis with his family.

An organization focused on researching and presenting history requires individuals who contribute a certain focused perspective. David Whitaker was one of those wise elders who, by his presence, added a voice of authority and connection to Brighton's history, and we will miss him. We are forever grateful for his service and contributions.

HB

Portrait of David Whitaker

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P.O. Box 18525
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2025 Historic Brighton Leo Dodd Heritage Preservation Award
Valerie O'Hara - The Pike Stained Glass Legacy

By *Beth Doty, Historic Brighton Trustee*

Valerie O'Hara of Pike Stained Glass Studios is our 2025 recipient of Historic Brighton's Leo Dodd Heritage Preservation Award. For approximately 60 years, Valerie has worked to create and preserve the stunning windows of local and regional churches, adding considerable aesthetic and spiritual value to these buildings. These glowing, magnificent artifacts help to attract and inspire the communities of faith who belong to the many churches where these windows filter the incoming light. Valerie is a third-generation artist in a unique 117-years-old family business that creates, repairs, and preserves a centuries-old art form.

In 2012, Valerie worked with the Memorial Art Gallery on their Tiffany window collection exhibit, creating a companion installation that explored the making of a stained glass window. She has also given talks on her art and her creative process to many local audiences.

For more on Valerie O'Hara, Pike Stained Glass, and the Stained Glass of St. Thomas More Church, see Historic Brighton Newsletter and Journal, Volume 21, Number 3, Summer 2020.

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For more information on the work of Valerie O'Hara and Pike Stained Glass Studios, go to

https://pikestainedglass.com

Above: close-up image of one of the many windows repaired by Pike Stained Glass Studios

Below: Valerie O'Hara giving a presentation at Third Presbyterian Church
Photos by Michael Lempert