



# *Greater Rochester History On-line*

A collaborative proposal by:

Rochester Hills Public Library  
Special Collections Department at Oakland University  
Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm

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# Greater Rochester History On-line

## *Introduction*

Unique and valuable historical resources will be made available to the public via a project called "Greater Rochester History On-line (GRHO)." The Rochester Hills Public Library (RHPL), the Special Collections Department at Oakland University (OU), and the Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm (RHM) are three community organizations interested in collaborating on GRHO, a digital local history project that will record past history for future generations. The three community partners own documents, correspondence, postcards, and photographs that showcase the history of the Greater Rochester Area, with an emphasis on the Van Hoosen and Dodge families.

## *Description of Community Partners*

The participating community partners will be the Rochester Hills Public Library, the Special Collections Department at Oakland University, and the Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm.

### *Rochester Hills Public Library*

The Rochester Hills Public Library was established in 1924. In November of 1992, the library moved to its present location in a new 70,000-square-foot building. The library serves a community of 77,000 people in the City of Rochester, the City of Rochester Hills, and Oakland Township. Holdings of the library include more than 190,000 books, 300 magazine subscriptions, and 21,000 cassettes, compact discs, talking books, and videos. The library is a popular community resource, as indicated by an annual circulation of over 900,000 items. RHPL benefits from strong community support and is dedicated to providing the best in customer service, innovative technology, and popular materials.

### *Special Collections Department at Oakland University*

The Special Collections Department was established in 1965 and is located in the Kresge Library on the campus of Oakland University. Archives in the Special Collections contain original materials regarding both Rochester and Rochester Hills (formerly known as Avon Township). In addition, the Special Collections Department holds materials on John Dodge, Matilda Dodge Wilson, and the origins of Meadow Brook Farms.

### *Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm*

The Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm is located in the former Van Hoosen family home, which was built in 1840. The major focus of the museum is the Van Hoosen family. The museum features many of the original home furnishings, and has an extensive collection of correspondence, photographs, and artifacts collected by the Van Hoosen family.

One of the goals of the museum is to preserve a small piece of rural America in a rapidly growing suburban area. The museum aspires to be a multi-purpose historical and recreational facility, and is used by many community service organizations, local history buffs, and students.

## *Need for the Project*

Based on experience working with clients at RHPL, there is a strong and ever-growing interest in local history. Inquiries about local history come from a variety of customer groups including students from elementary to college level, local historical societies, business people, and individuals with an interest in the community's past. Increasing interest in the area of genealogy has sparked many requests for information on past events, community origins, local personalities, home sites, area businesses, births and deaths, and so on.

While much of the information kept by RHPL, OU, and RHM is accessible to the public, it is often kept under lock and key for security as well as preservation purposes. Due to the nature of the materials (sensitivity to temperature, light, humidity, human use), the resources must be housed in preservation-appropriate containers. The public, therefore, is often unaware of their existence. Digitizing the resources for GRHO will provide increased awareness and accessibility while protecting and preserving the original documents.

Since Internet access is becoming more widespread, GRHO will augment services to the public by providing convenient access to valuable and interesting material. Having local history available on the Web will enable the public to become more aware of the history of the community and will generate more interest among individuals previously unaware of the subject. The storage and reproduction capabilities of computers will enable the public to reproduce documents without damaging the originals.

## *Description of the Project Team Members*

RHPL will provide a team leader and four team members to work on GRHO. The Curator of Special Collections at OU and the Director of the Rochester Hills Museum will contribute their expertise.

### *Larry Neal (RHPL)*

Larry Neal is the Head of Technical Systems. He has been employed at the library for over 15 years and is responsible for a network that includes three Windows NT 4.0 servers, 65 Windows 95 and NT Workstation 4.0 clients, 32 dial-in Internet access lines, and a T1 Internet connection. He is a member of the home page team that creates and maintains the library's Web site (<http://metronet.lib.mi.us/ROCH>) and is the team leader of the RHPL intranet. Larry is also responsible for all library graphics and desktop publishing. He has a working knowledge to advanced experience with the following applications: Microsoft Office 97 suite, Adobe PageMaker 6.5, PhotoShop 4.0, and FrontPage 98. Larry has an MBA from Oakland University and will serve as the project team leader for GRHO.

### *Sharon Campbell (RHPL)*

Sharon Campbell is an Adult Services Librarian and Internet Coordinator for RHPL. Her academic credentials include a B.A. and M.A. in English and a Master of Information and Library Studies. Sharon will bring two sets of skills to GRHO, those of Internet Coordinator and librarian. Sharon has experience in a wide range of Internet-related areas, including Internet use, Internet training and Web publishing. Sharon is the leader of RHPL's home page team and has experience in designing and implementing Web resources. She also has extensive contact with the public regarding Internet-related questions and problems. Her librarian skills will be used to select and organize content as well as to judge relevance and quality of information. Sharon works well in group situations. She offers suggestions that spur the thought processes of others, and is able to facilitate collaborative work. Sharon will work on developing and maintaining GRHO.

### *Jim Petrucella (RHPL)*

Jim Petrucella is an Adult Services Librarian at RHPL. He has a B.A. in Geography and Masters' degrees in both History and Library Science. During his Master's program in Library Science, Jim worked as an archival assistant in the Special Collections and Archives Department at Kent State University. There he became familiar with the organization, indexing, and preservation of historical documents. Jim is now in charge of the Local History Room at RHPL, and is familiar with the historical resources of the Greater Rochester Area. Jim's major contribution to this project will be his archival and history experience. He will select and organize items that will be incorporated into GRHO, and will be instrumental in project development, organization, and maintenance.

### *Steve Philips (RHPL)*

Steve Philips is an Adult Services Librarian with a B.A. in History and M.S. in Library Science. Steve served as RHPL's Local History librarian for two years and has good knowledge of the library's resources as well as many contacts in the field of Local History. Steve is a member of the RHPL home page team, and has extensive HTML experience. Steve will contribute both his historical knowledge and Internet expertise to GRHO. He is especially skilled at evaluating the usefulness and quality of resources, and will work with other team members on project development, organization, and maintenance.

### *Mary Vander Linde (RHPL)*

Mary Vander Linde has been an Adult Services Librarian at RHPL for eleven years. She has a B.S. in Unified Science and a M.S. in Library Science. Mary's tenure at RHPL makes her familiar with both the library's Local History collection and the community's historical resources. Mary's librarian skills include the ability to organize, prioritize, and index, all with attention to detail. She is good at working through problems, and enjoys troubleshooting. Mary is especially interested in the technical aspects of GRHO.

### *Robert Gaylor (OU)*

Robert Gaylor is an Associate Professor at Oakland University and Curator of OU's Special Collections. Bob's role in the project will be assisting in the selection, identification and verification of relevant items from Oakland University's archives for inclusion in GRHO.

## *Patrick McKay (RHM)*

Patrick McKay is the Supervisor of Interpretive Services for the City of Rochester Hills and is responsible for the operation, maintenance and development of the historical complex at Van Hoosen Farm. Pat's educational background includes a B.S. in Park Administration and Master of Arts in Teaching. His primary role in the digitization project will be selection of appropriate materials from the museum's collection.

## *Project Goals*

The major goal of GRHO is to facilitate and enhance the sharing of local history resources among three prominent community organizations. RHPL, OU, and RHM own unique historical items that are interrelated. GRHO will provide a central location for these resources, a location that will be convenient for students, researchers, and those with a general interest in local history.

GRHO will accomplish another goal: to spark awareness of the rich historical resources owned by RHPL, OU, and RHM. RHPL has been seeking a way of showcasing its unique Local History collection, and GRHO will allow access to the library's collection as well as the collections of Oakland University and the Rochester Hills Museum.

A third goal of the project will be the preservation of valuable historical items. Making resources available on the Internet will provide 24-hour, worldwide access while protecting and preserving irreplaceable historical documents.

## *Evaluation and Continuation*

GRHO will be an ongoing project. Emphasis on image quality and ease-of-use right from the start will help minimize subsequent maintenance. The focus for the future will consist of expansion of the Web site, and maintaining quality and consistency. Goals for GRHO will be incorporated into the RHPL's 5-year plan with an annual review presented to the Library Board.

GRHO will be evaluated by end users and by the RHPL librarians who assist users find information from GRHO. An on-line survey form will collect feedback about GRHO regarding its usefulness, ease of searching, quality of images (both graphic and text), and speed of retrieval.

Ongoing meetings of the project members and the advisory team will help ensure the project's success. Contacts with other institutions that have taken on similar projects will enable the team to further improve and evaluate the site's usefulness.

The RHPL team (team leader and librarians) will be responsible for maintaining GRHO based on user comments, increased knowledge, and new additions to the site. The Web site will be an ongoing endeavor that will surely surpass the duration of the original project.

## *Local Contribution*

RHPL will leverage its significant Internet infrastructure to provide maximum access to the server purchased by Merit. The public will have access to GRHO via several access points: 12 public access Web workstations (50 by December) in the library; a special station that prominently features GRHO in RHPL's Local History Room; through RHPL's 32 free dial-in Internet access lines; and from any PC in the world connected to the Internet via RHPL's T1 connection.

RHPL staff expertise and time will be a significant contribution to GRHO. In addition, the library will seek assistance from local historical organizations and service clubs.

*Please note: RHPL is currently standardized on Windows NT Server 4.0, Microsoft Internet Information Server, Microsoft Back Office, Microsoft Office 97, and Microsoft FrontPage 98. To minimize the need for additional training, RHPL requests that the GRHO project follow similar standards wherever possible. For security and performance purposes, GRHO will run on its own server in its own NT domain.*

## *Conclusion*

The development of GRHO will be instrumental in providing access to community information. The sharing of resources of the three community partners will result in preserving the historical record for current and future generations. By making GRHO a Tool K it project, the knowledge and experience gained can serve as model for other institutions interested in similar endeavors. GRHO will not only serve as an educational and research tool, but will also provide recreational value to Internet users. The unique information and graphics offered by GRHO will greatly benefit residents of the Greater Rochester Area, as well as Internet users worldwide.