

The Contemporary Roach Farm on Textile Road, 1975-1998

by Sally Roach (1998)

Site: 151 E. Textile Road (northeast corner of Marton and Textile).

In 1975, we moved to the Textile farm from Grosse Pointe. Neither my husband (Thomas Roach) or I came from a farm. I ran for the State House of Representatives seat in 1976 in what then was the old 52nd district. I lost to the incumbent in what then was a thoroughly Republican district, but it was an experience I do not regret.

Our house was built in about 1865 by Robert Campbell, an attorney from Ann Arbor. I always felt a certain kinship with the place because Campbell's daughter, Elizabeth, was one of the founders of Sigma Alpha Iota, my music sorority.

When we renovated the house, we found evidence of chimneys on the east and west sides of the house, which would have accommodated stoves on the first and second floors. The house had been remodeled to a two family with an outside stairway. We were told that the house had stood empty for some time and that the original floors had been chewed by animals, therefore, the modern flooring in the lower floors.

Our farm neighbor, Ralph Harwood -- who was born and lived in the house across the road just east of State (where only two silos now stand) -- told me that the oldest part of our barn, the south part, was built of timbers from an old church on the corner of Platt and Textile. If you look, you can see that those timbers are very old. .

In the barn, there was a pulley system set up with hay forks to move in hay through the huge door on the north end. When we moved in, the lower part of the barn was equipped for dairy cows. We cut the doors on the west side to allow delivery of feed to the bins inside. We also added the doors in the floor of the upper level so we could throw hay and straw down below to the animals.

The old shed with the thermometer was used for slaughtering and shearing of both the sheep and goats.

In 1989 I suffered a stroke. At the time, we had 300 sheep and 200 angora goats. We also sold over a thousand lambs a year to local Arabs, who slaughtered the animals on our property. The three days of the Big Feast was a hectic time. One year, the Ayatollah came to do the butchering.

We bred Finnish Landrace and Suffolk sheep, the Finns for both meat and wool, and the Suffolk for meat, which meant a lot of twins, triplets, and occasional quadruplets. Therefore we did a lot of bottle feeding. In the basement of our house, we had rigged up cages with nipples for the nursery lambs.

Note: Across Textile, in what today is Marsh Meadowview Park, a remnant of the foundation from the sheep barn on the old Campbell farm still is preserved.