

CHAT ROOM



RUTH MOEHLMAN

Pompeii shows city stopped in its tracks forever

On a recent trip we visited many ancient historic sites. A highlight was the city of Pompeii.

Our guided tour explained a lot about what we saw. The guide, a retired local teacher, picked out unusual and significant parts of the site.

Pompeii was an important trading and agricultural city in the Roman Empire.

Suddenly, 2,080 years ago, sulfur gas erupted from Mount Vesuvius, a volcano. Everything in the city of Pompeii stopped in its tracks.

The volcano released sulfur gas which appeared to be a harmless cloud. Everyone who breathed the gas died on the spot. After the sulfur, tiny lapilli, little round stones, rained down upon everything, followed by a layer of volcanic ash.

The city was buried until a farmer near Naples, Italy was digging a well. He found parts of the city. An archaeological dig began which is still in progress. We saw two men digging the dirt out of houses, stores and buildings.

Stone and marble

Most of the loose artifacts were removed to the National Museum. Everything from gold and silver jewelry to statues were found. The remains of buildings, frescoes, and mosaics remain on the site. Frescoes were painted into wet plaster and the great detail of the work is visible today. The mosaics were made of tiny polished stones placed into patterns, gracing the floors of well-to-do Pompeians. Because so much of the city was built of stone and marble, it was there to be discovered.

Inhabitants who dropped in their tracks left depressions that were filled with plaster by archaeologists. The images of some of those people have been reproduced in plaster. They are in detail down to the strings of their sandals. Some of the plasterers have been kept on site.

In Pompeii the marble sidewalks are still there. So are the stone streets with tracks of ancient chariots etched into the stone. Raised stones formed a walkway across the streets that were often muddy and also contained waste material. The stepping stones were placed in such a way that the chariots and carts could roll between them.

There is the remains of a large forum. The wooden parts and roof are gone but the stone parts are left. The theater is there and the stone part of the seats remain.

Palatial homes

We walked in the stone streets and on the marble sidewalks. Along the streets were remains of shops. Once there were living quarters over tiny shops. That part is gone now. The large entrance to the palatial homes had mosaic pools in the courtyards. Many have been preserved.

We were shown some new discoveries. A hotel where sailors and traders could stay while visiting the city has been found. A brothel, one of the many in the city, was unearthed. This one had stone bases for beds or couches. Outside each little room were frescoes depicting the special activities of the inhabitants.

There was an ancient bath, an athletic club. One side with a swimming pool for the men and the other side with a smaller pool for the women. The remains of an ancient dressing room was intact. The roof was still there. There were places to put ones belongings while enjoying the facilities. Not too different from a modern locker room.

Many things were very impressive. They built stone and marble buildings out of very large blocks without modern machinery. We were told that half the population of the city were slaves. The busy lifestyle with a democratic government, theater and amusements all existed over 2,000 years ago. There, suddenly, all life stopped in this large, beautiful, rich city.

There is more to be discovered, some of which may never be unearthed because people have built over the ruins. It is a large site

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Deb's Crafts leaving downtown

■ After five years and some personal setbacks, Deb Watson is scaling down her craft store business.

BY MARY RODRIQUE
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Deb's Crafts has come full circle. Deb Watson began sewing costumes for cement geese and making teddy bears around her dining room table almost six years ago.



Motorists traveling along Grand River west of Farmington Road may notice the cement geese couple in her front yard

always dressed in seasonally appropriate attire.

Five years ago, Watson decided to move her operation just down the road to the Village Mall at Grand River and Farmington roads.

Now after two locations downtown, Watson is packing up shop, scaling down her business, and planning to operate from her home again.

Hard to leave

"It's going to be hard to leave," she said on a recent afternoon in her gift shop, surrounded by shelves stocked with an array of gift items.

"I've been in this location almost two years and before that, in a smaller back spot (in the mall) for three years."

Besides the homemade bears and geese costumes, Watson stocks collectible dolls, stuffed animals and "anything my customers ask for."

The locale she's in now is three times the size of her first store. Customers come primarily from Farmington and Farmington Hills, with some from Livonia and Redford as well.

"Right now, custom-made gift baskets are the biggest thing," she said. "They've really taken off."



Craftmaster: Deb Watson in her store, Deb's Crafts, in downtown Farmington. She is downscaling her operation at the end of February.

For corporate clients, she can do a whole range of themes - high tea, candy or coffee lover, avid golfer. For real estate clients she creates a welcome-to-the-new-home basket. Her prices range from \$20 to \$100. She said baskets are popular for gift-givers who need to get something for someone who "has everything."

"Christmas was a big time. But it's hard to make the baskets, run the store, and also deliver them. I'm not a

mom and pop operation. I'm just a mom operation. (Operating) at home, I can cut the overhead, and get the baskets delivered."

Watson, who started her career as a bus driver for Farmington Public Schools, also plans to go back to school to earn a real estate license. She has a job lined up at Renaissance Real Estate in the Village Mall.

She has also battled serious illness during the past several years. Watson

had her first bout with colon cancer five years ago, shortly after she moved her operation into the Village Mall. A year of chemotherapy followed. Her second bout with the disease occurred about the time she moved into the larger facility.

Seven surgeries

"I've had seven surgeries," she said. "The last was liver surgery. I've had

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First post office oldest building in town

BY RUTH MOEHLMAN
SPECIAL WRITER

When Farmington got a United States Post Office in 1826, it also got an official name.

The first post office is still standing on Farmington Road and it is most likely the oldest building in Farmington.

In 1823 Arthur Power and his friend and neighbor, Dr. Ezekiel Webb of Ontario County, N.Y., decided to come to the Michigan territory to get some cheap land to develop.

In February 1824, Arthur Power with four others, his two sons, John and Jared, and two hired men established the first settlement in Farmington.

Dr. Webb followed later in the year and built a double log house.

When Arthur Power began building mills and stores in the area it became a true settlement. It was called the Power's settlement or Quaker Town. A descendant of Arthur Power, Nathan Power, described Dr. Webb in an article in the Farmington Enterprise, the forerunner of the Observer.

Nate Power wrote that Ezekiel Webb was a small man who was rather dynamic. Webb was a Quaker like his friend Arthur Power.

The first mail deliveries came to the settlement from Detroit in the fall of 1825 through the efforts of Dr. Webb.

Jan. 7, 1826 Dr. Webb received his official commission as postmaster. He was appointed by President John Quincy Adams.

As postmaster, Dr. Webb got to name the town. Conferring with Arthur Power, they selected Farmington, the name of the town where they had lived in New York. They didn't like the name Quaker-town.

The mail came once a week from Detroit by

horseback.

It was delivered to the combination physician's office and post office on Division Street (the current Farmington Road).

Dr. Webb would deliver the mail as he went about his professional duties as the only doctor in the area. It was said that he carried the mail in his large Quaker style hat.

It cost two shillings for a letter which was the only compensation for Dr. Webb except for franking privileges on his own letters.

Dr. Ezekiel and Fanny Webb's daughter Emeline married John Power, Arthur's son. John Power and David Smith, as members of the Power party, had chopped down the first tree in Farmington. Trees were chopped down to clear land for farming.

Arthur Power gave each of his children a farm. John's farm was 80 acres.

John Power and Emeline Webb were married by Justice of the Peace Amos Mead on Feb. 28, 1828. They had a son, John Power Webb, who was born after John Power died July 21, 1828. John Power was only 31 years old when he died.

As Arthur Power went about building stores and mills, he got into a disagreement with his friend Dr. Webb over property. Dr. Webb sold his hold-

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Historic home: Dr. Ezekiel Webb lived in this house on Farmington Road, north of Grand River and was the first postmaster in town in 1826.

She marks 102nd birthday at Botsford Commons

It was an elegant birthday party Tuesday, with a large white and pink icing-laden cake and a dozen red roses to mark the 102nd birthday of Edna Keating, a resident of Botsford Commons.

Edna's younger sisters Anna and Wilma were there. Anna, 100, also lives in the Farmington Hills continuing care complex.

Edna, who lives in the assisted living wing and is still quite independent, attributes her longevity to "Our Lord's will."

Dressed in a tasteful suit, she sat at the head table with her sisters and nephew in the dining room, where friends and family gathered for the noontime celebration and lunch.

A resident of Botsford Commons since it opened its doors in 1998, Edna had lived independently up to age 99, the last 10 years at the Kensington Apartments in Farmington Hills.

Widowed in 1950

Before that, she lived in a house she had built in 1956, six years after her husband, Jack, passed away. A widow at the age of 52, she fudged her age - dropping 10 years so that she could get a job. In 1951, anyone over 50 was considered old. Thus, from 1951 to 1966, she worked for Detroit Mutual Insurance Co.

She had married Jack Keating in 1924 and settled in Detroit. The two enjoyed pheasant hunting and trips to

Walled Lake and time at a cottage.

Born Jan. 9, 1899 in Tyre, in Michigan's thumb region, Edna grew up on a farm, the fifth of nine children. She and her two sisters at the party are the only siblings left.

In 1998, she took her first computer class, attending twice a week for six weeks. She finished just a few months shy of her 100th birthday. Daily she can be spotted in the Botsford learning center playing a game of solitaire.

Staffers recall that she was reluctant to publicly celebrate her 100th birthday, but this year she looked forward to a birthday bash. Since turning 100, Botsford CEO Gershon Cooper has sent her a dozen red roses to mark her special day.



Edna Keating, 102 years old