

Alexander Macomb Historical Award  
**Organization**



**Year Award Given:** 2017

**Awarded to:** Chesterfield Historical Society with Special Recognition of Roy Rivard – Chesterfield Township, Macomb, MI

**Nominated by:** Connie Firestine

**Presented Where:** MCHA Annual Meeting – Selfridge Air National – May 20, 2017

**Presented By:** Macomb County Heritage Alliance



The Chesterfield Historical Society is a small, but mighty army of dedicated historians. In 2006, they celebrated the grand opening of the Chesterfield Historic Village – a beautiful park-like setting on the grounds Chesterfield Township Municipal property. The village includes a collection of charming historic buildings that have been moved to the site from various locations throughout the township. They include a one-room schoolhouse, log cabin, cobbler shop and blacksmith shop. After over a year of planning, in 2016, this team, led by Roy Rivard, spearheaded one of the most significant historic building relocation moves in the township – that of the historic Koplring Chapel – to the historic village.

The Koplring Chapel was built in 1932 by the Koplring Society (a German religious group that dates back to 1849 in Colonge, Germany) on six acres of land near the au Vase River on Sugarbush Road near Cotton Road. Weighing between 60-70 tons, the building is constructed of coral, marble, granite, stones and shells that were provided (often shipped) by other Koplring Societies from around the world.

From negotiating with the Koplring Society to gain ownership of the building, to securing the thousands and thousands of dollars via fundraising and through a Weber Foundation grant (campaign started in 2016), to the many months of planning, coordinating with contractors, days and days of physical labor dismantling and reassembling the entire inside of the chapel including the altar, floor and seating, and numerous sleepless nights worrying, the chapel finally arrived at its new home in the village on September 28, 2016. The story in photos and video is available via their Koplring Chapel Facebook page, where you will also find so many supporters comments of encouragement and congratulations.

Historians know how challenging it can be to preserve history. This group is truly an inspiration in all they have been able to accomplish! Although most would agree that an effort of this magnitude usually needs many champions, several in the Chesterfield Historical Society agree that if it were not for the efforts and project management skill of their member, Roy Rivard, the chapel move and completion may not have ever happened. Roy was instrumental in every aspect of the move, took on and resolved many of the challenges that came about throughout the process, and spent countless hours (many days alone) working on the project. To provide a glimpse into magnitude of the difficulty of moving the Koplring Chapel to Chesterfield Historic Village, the moving company equated it as the equivalent of moving a 60-ton wet cardboard box!

In the spring of 2017, the first wedding took place in the chapel at its new location and in July 2017, Roy and his wife along with another couple (Bruno and Barb) renewed their vows in the chapel in celebration of their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversaries. Later in 2017, Roy was also successful in securing a number of generous donations that facilitated the purchase of new stained glass window installations in every one of the chapel's windows. The chapel now serves as a stunning anchor and noteworthy component of the Chesterfield Historic Village.

The significance of the preservation of the Koplring Chapel to Macomb County history, the dedication of the Chesterfield Historical Society and the fortitude, skill and passion of Roy Rivard, make them very worthy recipients of the 2017 Alexander Macomb Historical Award for an organization.

Source: Chesterfield Historical Society March 2017