



*Elizabeth Blay Maison Schelling*  
**Local History Writing Contest**

## Rock of Gibraltar

by Joshua Mills

*2009 Elizabeth Blay Maison Schelling Local History Writing Contest  
Division I Award Winner*

**G**ibraltar Trade Center North is located near the I-94 Ford Freeway and North River Road. It opened the weekend of November 3, 1990. Gibraltar Trade Center North is a unique weekend flea market with hundreds of sellers that run their own stands to try to sell anything you can think of. The whole reason why Gibraltar Trade Center North is only open on weekends is because the owners believe more buyers will come out to shop.

The land Gibraltar Trade Center North sits on has a lot of great memories. Before 1925, the land was used for old harness horse races. After World War II, the owners, Clayton T. Stubbs and his wife Ruth, used it for a private pheasant hunting preserve. The Stubbs were asked if they wanted to fix up the old harness racing track for car races. Mr. and Mrs. Stubbs agreed to do it and the first race was held on September 3, 1951 and thousands of fans attended. People say the race track was popular and everyone liked to go and watch races. In 1954, a man-made lagoon was created for small boats to race on and for water skiing shows. The Stubbs decided to sell the race track to Henry J. Winkler and his wife, Cynthia in 1977. In March, 1986, the Winklers sold the property to the City of Mount Clemens for \$725,000. A year later, the City of Mount Clemens sold the race track to Gebran Anton and Riverside Associates, who leased it to James A. Koester. Mr. Koester then built Gibraltar Trade Center North at the location on North River and I-94.

Gibraltar Trade Center North has a humongous color billboard showing a giant man next to the freeway. The man on the billboard does not have a name. So, I've decided to call

him "Rock." Why? Because when you are on the freeway and you pass "Rock," you know you're in Mount Clemens, Michigan, which I call my home. "Rock" is a landmark for both Mount Clemens and for Gibraltar Trade Center North.

According to records at the Mount Clemens Building Department, "Rock" towers 94 feet over the freeway and his body is about 32 feet wide. The Casey Sign Company installed "Rock" and an engineer named Robert C. Cowles prepared plans and drawings for the sign in August of 1990.

"Rock" has a handsome derby hat, a vest with stars that look like polka-dots, a cane, a bow tie, striped pants and white spats with buttons on his shoes. To me he is a very snappy dresser! "Rock" is standing up straight with his leg crossed and his elbow resting on the top of the Gibraltar Trade Center North sign.

"Rock" and Gibraltar Trade Center North all began in 1990, which was an interesting year. For example, on January 28, 1990 at the New Orleans Super Dome, the San Francisco '49ers and the Denver Broncos were battling to win the Super Bowl. The '49ers came out on top with the winning score of 55 to the Broncos' 10. Two of the most popular movies of that year were *Home Alone* and *The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Also, our own Detroit Pistons defeated the Portland Trail Blazers in the NBA Finals and the starting point guard, Isaiah Thomas, turned out to be the MVP (Most Valuable Player). Do you remember the mayor of Washington D.C. in 1990? His name was Marion Barry. In 1990, he was arrested and accused of buying illegal drugs.

Gibraltar Trade Center North is special because it has been around for almost twenty years. From 1990 to now, lots of other well-known businesses have all shut down: J.L. Hudson's, Crowley's Department Store, Value City Stores, Farmer Jack Grocery Stores, F & M Drug Stores, Montgomery Ward, and plenty more. To me, Gibraltar Trade Center is still open because it has great values. It is a place where everyday people can sell almost anything.

Many cities have a famous landmark. For example, St. Louis, Missouri has its Gateway Arch and Paris has the Eiffel Tower. Since 1990, "Rock" has been a landmark for the City of Mount Clemens and Gibraltar Trade Center North. So, this makes him our very own, extraordinary "Rock of Gibraltar."

## SOURCES

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