

Unit 3 – 1800’s Clinton County

Objectives:

1. Students will describe the daily life in Clinton County of the 1800’s
2. Students will compare and contrast the lives of children in the past with today.

Essential Questions:

1. What was it like to live on a farm or town in the 1800’s?
2. What were schools like in the 1800’s?
3. How were their lives of people in the 1800’s the same and different from yours?

Michigan Standards

3-H3.07 Use a variety of primary and secondary sources to construct a historical narrative about daily life in the early settlements of Michigan.

E.ES.03.51 Describe ways humans are dependent on the natural environment and constructed environments.

4 – H3.0.4 Describe how the relationship between the location of natural resources and the location of industries (after 1837) affected and continue to affect the location and growth of Michigan cities.

1800's Clinton County

First Settlers

Life was hard for the first settlers. After purchasing their land, they had little money left over to buy anything else. Even if they did, they would have to travel several days to buy supplies in Pontiac or Detroit. After the first crops of wheat or corn were harvested, your father would need to take the long trip to Dexter to have it ground into flour. Some of the flour would be brought back to use for making bread.

At first you would have lived in a small log cabin. Children would sleep in the loft with straw for beds.

Clearing land and doing chores would take up most of your day. Until a well was dug, you would have to haul water from the nearest river or lake.



Your bathroom would have been an outhouse. An outhouse was like a porta potty. Since going to the outhouse wasn't easy if it was cold, rainy, or dark, you would use a bedpan when you didn't want to go outside. There were no showers or bathtubs. To take a bath you would sit or stand in a washtub and pour warm water over yourself while washing.



Optional: [Chamber Pots](#)

After a sawmill was built near you, your family could have boards cut and build a wood frame house and barn with the help of your neighbors. The old log cabin would then be used as a shed or barn or schoolhouse.

Once there were enough neighbors, a school would be started and teacher hired. The first schools were usually in old log cabins. If the teacher didn't live close by, she or he would take turns living with families in the area. Older children would only go to school during the winter when there wasn't as much farm work. Most children only went to school for grades 1st-6th. All six grades were in the same room with the same teacher. Because most children only went to school during the winter, they might be 17 or 18 before they finished 6th grade.



Island School, Lebanon Township

Younger children would write on slate boards. Older children would use quill pens and ink to write on paper.

Optional: video on [one-room schools](#) (YouTube)

Optional: Do lessons with the class from 1800's textbooks. (see below)

Railroads come to Clinton County

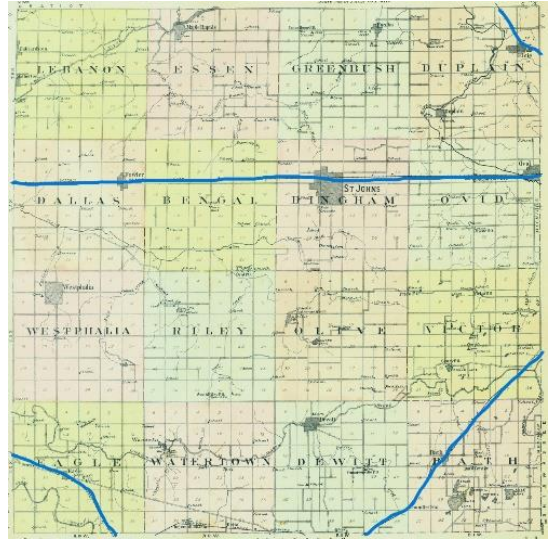
Beginning in the 1850's four railroad lines built tracks that crossed Clinton County. Next to these tracks towns were started. The railroad towns were: Bath, Eagle, Elsie, Fowler, Ovid, Shepardsville, and St. Johns.

Farm families could now travel to the nearest town to buy and sell goods. They could also ride on trains to get to distant places much faster.

Farm Life

Optional: Make [butter in a jar](#)

If you lived on a farm in the 1800's you would have a lot of chores. Children would help their mothers make meals, get water, churn butter, wash dishes and clothes, clean the house, and take care of younger brothers and sisters. They would help their fathers feed and care for the animals, milk cows, gather eggs, remove weeds and stones from fields, chop and split firewood, and plant and harvest crops.



Railroads of Clinton County

There were lots of special jobs that needed to be done at different times of the year. In the spring fields needed to be plowed with horses or oxen and crops planted. Maple trees were tapped and the sap boiled to make maple syrup and maple sugar.



Sugar bush near Elsie boiling maple sap into syrup and sugar

During the summer hay had to be harvested and stored for the winter. Fields needed to be weeded. Wild berries and fruit were picked.

In the fall crops were harvested. Root crops were stored in a cool cellar. Grains were taken to a gristmill to be ground into flour. Hickory nuts and walnuts were gathered and stored. Livestock were butchered and candles and soap made.



When winter came timber was cut, hauled over the snow, and chopped into firewood. Once the settlers were able to build an ice house to keep food cold all year long, ice would need to be harvested and hauled to the ice house.



Optional: Show clip from Frozen showing [harvesting of ice](#). (YouTube)

Children had very few toys. When they had free time, they would play games like blind-man's bluff, hide and seek, and find the thimble.

Optional: 1800's [children's games](#)

Until the 1960's most farm children went to one-room schools. While the first ones were only for grades 1-6, by the end of the 1800's most were Kindergarten through 8th grade.

Town Life

As more people came to Clinton County, towns were started and grew. If you were living in a town your family were not farmers. Your parents would own or work at a business and you might need to help them.

Towns would have general stores, grocery stores, blacksmiths, and churches. Larger towns would have halls for town meetings, music shows, plays, and dances.

You would still have chores, but not as many. In towns there were more kids your age to play with. Your house would have a stable in the back for a horse and buggy. Just like the farm kids, you would also have an outhouse.

Other than a small garden, your family would need to buy everything they needed from stores in town.

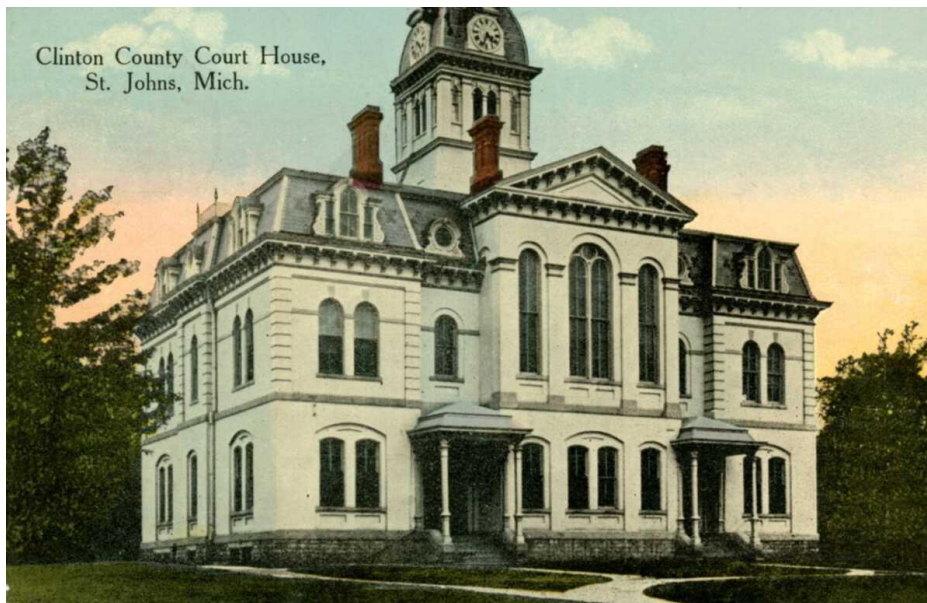


Blacksmith Shop in Fowler

Your school would be bigger than the one-room schools. The town schools would have more than one teacher with fewer grades in each classroom. By the end of the 1800's most of the larger towns also had 2 or more high school grades.

Clinton County Courthouse

In 1871 Clinton County moved into a new courthouse in St. Johns. It was erected on courthouse square at the end of Clinton Street. It had a large front lawn.



Notes: When the original courthouse building became too small, two wings were added to the sides. In 1998 the present courthouse was built in front of this courthouse. The old courthouse was demolished and the space became a parking lot.

Optional: What were some challenges faced by early Clinton County settlers and how did they meet them?

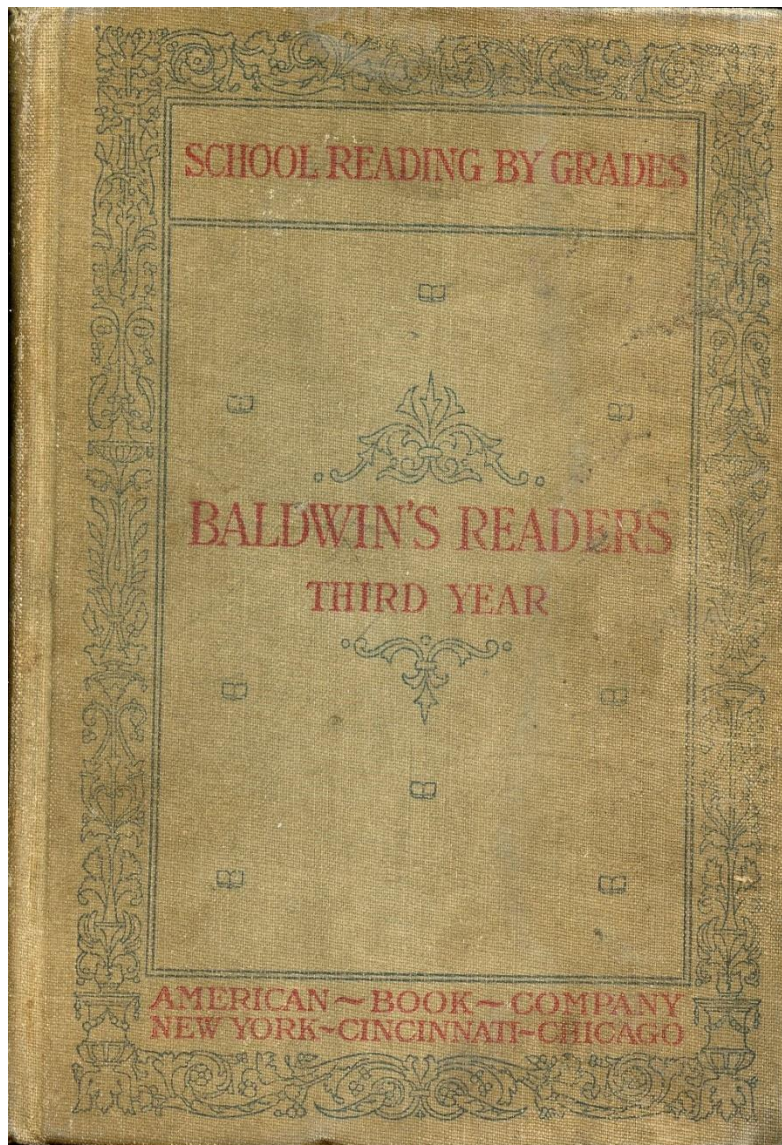
Optional: How was the life of a child in early Clinton County different from your life today?

1800's School Lessons

Note: See [One-Room Schools](#) for additional information on one-room schools.

A variety of methods were used to teach reading. In the early days the Blab method was often used with all students reading in unison. Later some used the whole word method, others a phonics-based method, and still others a combination of the two.

Additional information can also be found in the book *Clinton County Schools: A brief history of the schools of Clinton County, Michigan* (Clinton Co Historical Society).



SCHOOL READING.

THIRD YEAR.



whistle candy tasted spend pennies
coppers jingled drawer shook shopkeeper

THE STORY OF A WHISTLE.

I.

1. On the day that Benjamin Franklin was seven years old, his mother and brothers gave him a few pennies.

“What shall I do with these coppers, mother?” he said. “Shall I keep them in my pocket?”

2. “You may spend them for something that you like,” said his mother.

“And may I have more when these are gone?” he asked.

3. His mother shook her head. “No, I cannot give you any more. So you must take care how you spend these.”

4. The little boy ran out into the street. The yellow pennies jingled in his pocket as he ran, and made pleasant music for him.

5. Should he buy candy or toys? He liked them both. He had not tasted candy for a long time; and he could not remember that he had ever played with a toy of his own.

6. He thought that the pennies in his pocket kept saying, "Candy or toys! candy or toys!" And he could not make up his mind which he wanted most.

7. As he was running along, he met a boy blowing a whistle. "That is just what I want," he said; and he hurried across the street to the place where whistles were sold.

8. "Have you any good whistles?" he asked. He felt as if he were almost a man.

"Yes, plenty of them," said the shopkeeper. "Will you buy a whistle to-day?"

9. "I'll give you all the money I have for one of them!" said Benjamin. He did not think to ask the price.

"How much money have you?" asked the man. "Let me see."

10. Benjamin showed him the pennies. The man counted them, and then said, "It's all right, my little fellow." He put the bright coppers into his money drawer, and gave one of the whistles to the little boy. "Here is a whistle that will please you," he said.



"Just hear me blow it!"

II.

11. Benjamin Franklin was very happy. He ran home as fast as he could, blowing his whistle as he went.

"What have you there, my child?" asked his mother.

12. "A whistle! a whistle!" he cried. "Just hear me blow it."

"How much did you pay for it?"

"All the money I had!"

13. His brother, who was sitting in the door, laughed. "Well! well! Did you give all your pennies for that whistle?"

"Yes," said little Benjamin, and he spoke very slowly, "I gave the man every one of them."

14. "You ought to have asked the price," said his mother, kindly. "You have paid four times what it is worth."

15. "Yes," said his brother. "That is a dear whistle, I think. You had enough money to buy a whistle and some candy too."

16. The little boy began to cry. But his mother took him upon her lap and said, "Never mind, my dear. We must all live and learn; and I think that, after this, my little boy will take care not to pay too much for his whistles."

III.

17. As long as Benjamin Franklin lived, he did not forget the lesson which he learned that day. He said, "If I am idle and spend my time for nothing, what is that but paying too much for a whistle?"

18. And so he was careful to make good use of every hour. He was always busy; he was always trying to learn something that would be useful to himself and to others.

19. He could not go to school as boys do now, but he read all the good books that he could get. And in time he became one of the greatest and wisest men that ever lived in our country.



Benjamin Franklin.

20. When you are a little older, you will read more about him, and about the many things which he did to make people happier and better. It is now more than a hundred years since he lived, but the name of Benjamin Franklin will never be forgotten.

PROGRESSIVE
INTELLECTUAL
ARITHMETIC



NEW YORK:
IVISON, PHINNEY, BLAKEMAN & CO.

36. A soldier was 33 years of age when he engaged in the battle of New Orleans; what was his age 44 years after?

37. A farmer received 29 dollars for some pork, 18 dollars for some hay, 15 dollars for some oats, and 12 dollars for four cords of wood; how many dollars did he receive for the whole?

38. Thomas hoed 13 rows of corn, Lyman 16 rows, Cyrus 14 rows, and Warren 10 rows; how many rows did they all hoe?

39. A gentleman gave 30 dollars for a coat, 7 dollars for a vest, 11 dollars for a pair of pantaloons, and 5 dollars for a hat; what was the cost of all?

40. Paid 60 dollars for a carriage, which, with 25 dollars, I gave for a horse; paid 12 dollars for his keeping, and then sold him for 20 dollars more than he cost me; for how much did I sell him?

41. A man deposited 40 dollars in a bank, which was 15 dollars less than his neighbor deposited at the same time; how much did both deposit?

CHAPTER II.

SUBTRACTION.

8. 1. JAMES, having 5 cents, gave 2 cents for a pencil; how many cents had he left?

ANALYSIS. *Since James had 5 cents, and gave 2 cents for a pencil, he had left the difference between 5 cents and 2 cents. The difference between 5 cents and 2 cents, is 3 cents. Therefore, he had 3 cents left.*

2. Mary had 3 peaches, and ate 1 of them; how many had she left?

3. Ella had 6 pinks, and gave her sister 2; how many had she left?