



# Clinton County Historical Society

Museum & Archives

CCHS Newsletter



Volume 2 Issue 6

August 2025

## Mint Festival at the Museum

### Meet the Volunteers

Gayla Phillips

My name is Gayla Phillips. I was the oldest child of Charles & Evangeline Johnson. I grew up primarily on a farm in Clinton County where I did most of the usual farm chores with cows, sheep, hogs, chickens, and horses. I attended Union Home Elementary School through the eighth grade and then rode the bus to Rodney B. Wilson High School. Following graduation, I attended CMU.



I have attended church regularly since childhood and became a Christian at an early age. That's where I met my husband, Dennis Phillips. I held many position in the church including treasurer. Following my marriage, I began working at MSU until just prior to the birth of our first child after which I became a stay-at-home mom. I didn't start regularly working away from home until later, including being the bookkeeper for our orchard and retail businesses. I worked many places, but retired from Clinton County in 2018 following my husband's diagnosis of Alzheimer's. Following his death in 2021 I began volunteering at more non-profits including our local cemetery and the CCHS while still volunteering at church.

My interest in the CCHS was triggered by my interest in genealogy when my children were in elementary school. I still have more relatives to find and the stories and artifacts of the past still hold my strong interest.

### Other Upcoming Events

September 10—DeWitt Cemetery Walk  
September 13—*Preserve Our History* at DeWitt District Library  
September 18—Fall CCHS meeting at Bingham Twp. Hall  
September 21—Mount Rest Cemetery Walk

This year the Clinton County Historical Society will be celebrating the St. Johns Mint Festival at the Museum campus located at 106 Maple St. in St. Johns, across from the Clinton County Courthouse.



On Saturday from 9-3 pm stop by the Museum to take a tour of this year's exhibit, *100 Years of Rodney B. Wilson: The High School Years from 1925-1969*. You can also stop by the Carriage House where we have been busy re-creating our displays after our 18-month renovation.

Please make sure to put the CCHS on your to-do list during this year's Mint Festival. You won't be disappointed.

### Ron Matson Passes

Long time CCHS Board member and Museum historian Ron Matson passed away on July 29, 2025.

Ron began volunteering at the museum in 2008 and was appointed to the advisory board in 2011. He organized the document room at the museum where documents and photos relating to Clinton County are located. He researched and wrote about the history of the foundries located in St. Johns and also wrote the history of gasoline and steam engines manufactured here.

A complete eulogy will appear in our September newsletter.



### Mike Morey to Speak

CCHS President Mike Morey will be featured at [Coffee and Conversation](#) on August 12 at 1 pm at the Valley Farms Community Center. He will speak on personal safety and encourage a tour of the CCHS archives after the talk. This is a free event with light refreshments.



## **MONTHLY REPORT OF ACQUISITIONS & RESEARCH**

June 2025 Acquisitions

Meeting: July 9, 2025

We had 4 visitors in June. Work continues as Cindy is finally seeing the light at the end of scanning the Tobin/Fitch negatives tunnel. Haila is also on the last stretch of digitizing the scrapbooks. Myrna has been indexing like crazy on a 12 binder set of a scrapbook. Mike has been working on acquisitioning the Congregational Church boxes we received when the church closed. Rowlan is going through the vertical files for duplicates and general clean-up. I have been pulling my hair out trying to keep them in line. 😊 Actually they are a great group of conscientious volunteers who I'm proud to work with.

### **ACQUISITIONS JUNE 2025**

#### **CHURCHES:**

- From the First Congregational Church of St. Johns: A black book titled "Our book of Golden Memories" which contains death records of 26 persons from the congregation. [CH 282A]
- From the First Congregational Church of St. Johns; A large black ledger book with metal binding, titled "The Practical Church Record" which contains vital records for many members of the church congregation. [CH 282B]
- From the First Congregational Church in St. Johns; A large red book titled "The Church Register" which contains information about church members, including those whose membership was terminated due to their death. [CH 282C]
- From the First Congregational Church in St. Johns; A large red hardbound book titled "The Church Register" which contains vital records for many members of the church congregation. [CH 282D]
- From the First Congregational Church in St. Johns; A red and black book titled "The Pilgrim Church Register" which contains vital record information for several members of the congregation. [CH 282E]
- From the First Congregational Church of St. Johns; A red book with gold lettering titled "The Church Register" which contains vital records information about several members of the congregation. [CH 282F]
- From the First Congregational Church in St. Johns; A black and burgundy ledger book which has the title "Journal" on the spine, that contains church trustee meeting minutes and treasurer reports from the 1920's and 1930's. [CH 282G]

- From the First Congregational Church in St. Johns; A brown ledger book that has the title "Records" on the spine, which contains church business meeting minutes from the late 1800's and early 1900's. [CH 282H]
- First Congregational Church of St. Johns, MI on the occasion of the 125 Year Anniversary. The Story of The Anniversary Quilt; 1984; [CH 282I]
- 1951 Church Messenger, Maple Rapids Congregational Church History/Directory [CH 278-1]
- 1975 Maple Rapids Congregational Church History [CH 278-2]
- 1979 St. Johns St. Joseph's Parish Directory

#### **DIRECTORIES:**

- 1990 St. Johns City Directory (R. L. Polk)

#### **ORAL HISTORIES:**

- Transcripts of Fowler Sophomore Interviews of People Growing up 1945-1970

#### **PHOTOS:**

- 1887 Photo of Maple St & State St (Old Cong. Church / Hicks Mansion)[CC93]
- 1951 Cong. Church Manse (on rt) & the now CCH Museum [CC-101]
- ca 1906 Cong. Church girls' Sunday School Class (l to r) Cecil Hugus, Una Berry, Eva McKinley, Marjorie Stowell, Lucy Ballinger, Anna Estes Pierson, Beulah Sowle Ballentine, Gertrude Salle Mitchell, Fledia McCreary, Verna McCreary, Oral MacAuslin Ryan [CC-92]
- Ca 1950's Cong. Church choir; Frances Gibson, Hila Bross, Dr. Wilcox, Bob Gladstone, ?, R. Crosby, ? Pease, Mary Alice Northouse, Gibson, Gibon, Gladstone, Pat Steavens, Chuck Dickens, R. Ebert, Carmen Cook, Wirick [CC-87]
- ca 1950's Cong. Church Sunday School Class [CC-91]
- ca 1950 Cong. Church Choir [CC-89]
- 1953 Cong. Church Choir [CC-90]
- 1953 Cong. Church Choir [CC-88]
- ca 1950's Cong Church Parsonage [CC-100]
- 1974 Cong. Church Parsonage just before demolition [CC-94]
- 1974 Cong. Church [CC-95]
- ca 1960's Congregational Church St. Johns [CC-96]
- ca 1960's Congregational Church & Parsonage [CC-97]
- ca 1980 SJ Congregational Church [CC-98]
- ca 1978 SJ Congregational Church Carson Center addition [CC-99]
- 1938 Elsie High School group photo w/ names on back
- 1-20 of Davis Dredging in Clinton County
- Elma Sarah UPTON; b. July 10, 1892; dau of Elmer G. (1893-1926) & Hattie (Stead) Upton (1870-1962); married Thomas L. Roberts, mother of Gayle L (1914) and Shirley (1919)
- Original DeWitt High School
- 1949 Veteran's Day, DeWitt Memorial Building Dedication

- Dale Hines (HS Principal) & Mr. Furstenau (DeWitt Superintendent)
- Bridge Street, DeWitt; ca 1900
- Ornate album presented to Mary A. by her son Ira M. Ward, 1882 with unidentified photos [PI 261]

**SCHOOLS:**

- One Room Schoolhouses in Clinton County, dates in service, Twp. Locations & Teachers 2025; 63 pp; by Jim Price
- St. Johns Rodney B. Wilson Classes of 1947 & 1948 History & Reunions

Respectfully submitted:  
Julie Peters, Director  
CCHS Archives

